

Federal Communications Commission.

Victoria M. McCauley,

Assistant Chief, Allocations Branch, Policy and Rules Division, Mass Media Bureau.

[FR Doc. 93-27448 Filed 11-8-93; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6712-01-M

47 CFR Part 73

[MM Docket No. 93-210; RM-8283]

Radio Broadcasting Services; Webster Springs, West Virginia

AGENCY: Federal Communications Commission.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: The Commission, at the request of Cat Radio, Inc., substitutes Channel 262B for Channel 262A at Webster Springs, and modifies its construction permit accordingly. See 58 FR 40398, July 28, 1993. Channel 262B can be allotted to Webster Springs in compliance with the Commission's minimum distance separation requirements without the imposition of a site restriction petitioner's requested site. The coordinates for Channel 262B at Webster Springs are North Latitude 38-28-42 and West Longitude 80-34-54. Since Webster Springs is located within the protected areas of the National Radio Astronomy Observatory "Quiet Zone" at Green Bank, West Virginia, petitioner will be required to comply with the notification requirements of § 73.1030(a) of the Commission's Rules. With this action, this proceeding is terminated.

EFFECTIVE DATE: December 17, 1993.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Sharon P. McDonald, Mass Media Bureau, (202) 634-6530.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This is a synopsis of the Commission's Report and Order, MM Docket No. 93-210, adopted October 10, 1993, and released November 2, 1993. The full text of this Commission decision is available for inspection and copying during normal business hours in the FCC Reference Center (Room 239), 1919 M Street NW., Washington, DC. The complete text of this decision may also be purchased from the Commission's copy contractors, International Transcription Service, Inc., (202) 857-3800, 2100 M Street NW., suite 140, Washington, DC 20037.

List of Subjects in 47 CFR Part 73

Radio broadcasting.

Part 73 of title 47 of the Code of Federal Regulations is amended as follows:

PART 73—[AMENDED]

1. The authority citation for part 73 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 47 U.S.C. 154, 303.

§ 73.202 [Amended]

2. Section 73.202(b), the Table of FM Allotments under West Virginia, is amended by removing Channel 262A and adding Channel 262B at Webster Springs.

Federal Communications Commission.

Victoria M. McCauley,

Assistant Chief, Allocations Branch, Policy and Rules Division, Mass Media Bureau.

[FR Doc. 93-27449 Filed 11-8-93; 8:45 am]

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47 CFR Part 73

[MM Docket No. 93-219; RM-8290]

Radio Broadcasting Services; Staples, Minnesota

AGENCY: Federal Communications Commission.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: This document substitutes Channel 234C3 for Channel 234A at Staples, Minnesota, and modifies the construction permit for Station KSKK to specify operation on Channel 234C3 in response to a petition filed by Normin Broadcasting Company. Canadian concurrence has been received for the allotment of Channel 234C3 at Staples at coordinates 46-23-29 and 94-57-21. With this action, this proceeding is terminated.

EFFECTIVE DATE: December 17, 1993.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Kathleen Scheuerle, Mass Media Bureau, (202) 634-6530.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This is a summary of the Commission's Report and Order, MM Docket No. 93-219, adopted October 19, 1993, and released November 2, 1993. The full text of this Commission decision is available for inspection and copying during normal business hours in the Commission's Reference Center (room 239), 1919 M Street NW., Washington, DC. The complete text of this decision may also be purchased from the Commission's copy contractors, International Transcription Services, Inc., 2100 M Street NW., suite 140, Washington, DC 20037, (202) 857-3800.

List of Subjects in 47 CFR Part 73

Radio broadcasting.

Part 73 of title 47 of the Code of Federal Regulations is amended as follows:

PART 73—[AMENDED]

1. The authority citation for part 73 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 47 U.S.C. 154, 303

§ 73.202 [Amended]

2. Section 73.202(b), the Table of FM Allotments under Minnesota, is amended by removing Channel 234A and adding Channel 234C3 at Staples.

Federal Communications Commission.

Victoria M. McCauley,

Assistant Chief, Allocations Branch, Policy and Rules Division, Mass Media Bureau.

[FR Doc. 93-27450 Filed 11-8-93; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration****50 CFR Parts 204, 672, 675, and 676**

[Docket No. 921114-3183; I.D. 102892B]

RIN 0648-AD19

Pacific Halibut Fisheries; Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska; Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands; Limited Access Management of Fisheries off Alaska

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: NMFS issues a final rule to implement Amendment 15 to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the Groundfish Fishery of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands area (BSAI), Amendment 20 to the FMP for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska (GOA), and a regulatory amendment affecting the fishery for Pacific halibut in and off the State of Alaska (Alaska or State). These regulations establish an individual fishing quota (IFQ) limited access system in fixed gear fisheries for Pacific halibut and sablefish in and off Alaska. In addition, this action implements a Western Alaska Community Development Quota (CDQ) program for halibut and sablefish fixed gear fisheries.

These actions are intended by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) to promote the conservation and management of halibut and sablefish resources, and to further the objectives of the Northern Pacific Halibut Act of 1982 (Halibut Act) and the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson Act)

Each CDQ card will identify a CDQ permit number and the individual authorized by the managing organization to land halibut or sablefish for debit against its CDQ allocation.

(4) No person may alter, erase, or mutilate any CDQ permit or card or registered buyer permit issued under this section. Any such permit or card that has been intentionally altered, erased, or mutilated will be invalid.

(5) All landings of halibut or sablefish harvested under an approved CDQ project must be landed by a person with a valid CDQ card to a person with a valid registered buyer permit, and reported as prescribed in § 676.14 of this part. Dockside sales and outside landings of halibut and sablefish under an approved CDQ program also may be made in compliance with § 676.14(d) of this part.

TABLE 1 to § 676.24—Communities Initially Determined To Be Eligible To Apply for Community Development Quotas

Aleutian Region

1. Atka
2. False Pass
3. Nelson Lagoon
4. Nikolski
5. St. George
6. St. Paul

Bering Strait

1. Brevig Mission
2. Diomedes/Inalik
3. Eklm
4. Gambell
5. Golovin
6. Koyuk
7. Nome
8. Savoonga
9. Shaktoolik
10. St. Michael
11. Stebbins
12. Teller
13. Unalakleet
14. Wales
15. White Mountain

Bristol Bay

1. Aleknagik
2. Clark's Point
3. Dillingham
4. Egegik
5. Ekuuk
6. Manokotak
7. Naknek
8. Pilot Point/Ugashik
9. Port Heiden/Meschick
10. South Naknek

11. Sovonoski/King Salmon
12. Togiak
13. Twin Hills

Southwest Coastal Lowlands

1. Alakanuk
2. Chefornak
3. Chevak
4. Eek
5. Emmonak
6. Goodnews Bay
7. Hooper Bay
8. Kipnuk
9. Kongiganak
10. Kotlik
11. Kwigillingok
12. Mekoryuk
13. Newtok
14. Nightmute
15. Platinum
16. Quinhagak
17. Scammon Bay
18. Sheldon's Point
19. Toksook Bay
20. Tununak
21. Tuntutuliak

§ 676.25 Determinations and appeals. (Reserved)

[FR Doc. 93-27128 Filed 11-8-93; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 2510-22-P

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 675

[Docket No. 921185-3021; LD. 110493A]

Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Area

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Prohibition of retention.

SUMMARY: NMFS is prohibiting retention of Pacific cod in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). NMFS is requiring that incidental catches of Pacific cod be treated in the same manner as prohibited species and discarded at sea with a minimum of injury. This action is necessary because the total allowable catch (TAC) for Pacific cod in the BSAI has been reached.

EFFECTIVE DATE: 12 noon, Alaska local time (A.L.T.), November 7, 1993, until 12 midnight A.L.T., December 31, 1993.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Andrew N. Smoker, Resource Management Specialist, Fisheries Management Division, NMFS, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The groundfish fishery in the BSAI exclusive economic zone is managed by the Secretary of Commerce according to the Fishery Management Plan for the Groundfish Fishery of the BSAI (FMP) prepared by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council under authority of the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Fishing by U.S. vessels is governed by regulations implementing the FMP at 50 CFR parts 620 and 675.

In accordance with § 675.20(a), the final 1993 initial specifications (58 FR 8703, February 17, 1993) and subsequent reserve release (58 FR 14172, March 16, 1993) established the TAC specification for Pacific cod in the BSAI as 164,500 metric tons. The directed fishery for Pacific cod was closed on May 11, 1993 (58 FR 28522, May 14, 1993). The Director of the Alaska Region, NMFS, has determined, in accordance with § 675.20(a)(9), that the TAC for Pacific cod in the BSAI has been reached. Therefore, NMFS is requiring that further catches of Pacific cod in the BSAI be treated as a prohibited species in accordance with § 675.20(c), and is prohibiting its retention effective from 12 noon, A.L.T., November 7, 1993, until 12 midnight, A.L.T., December 31, 1993.

Classification

This action is taken under 50 CFR 675.20.

List of Subjects in CFR Part 675

Fisheries, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.

Dated: November 4, 1993.

David S. Crestin,

Acting Director, Office of Fisheries Conservation and Management, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 93-27514 Filed 11-4-93; 12:22 pm]

BILLING CODE 2510-22-M

March 27, 1992. At its meeting in April 1992, the Council received additional public comment on the proposed IFQ program and the March 27, 1992, analysis, and reconfirmed its original decision to recommend the halibut and sablefish IFQ program to the Secretary. A 45-day public comment period on the draft EIS was announced on May 15, 1992 (57 FR 20826).

The Director, Alaska Region, NMFS (Regional Director), made a preliminary evaluation of all documents relevant to the Council's IFQ recommendation and determined that they were sufficient in scope and substance to warrant public and Secretarial review. The official "receipt date" of the Council's IFQ program recommendation is October 26, 1992. A notice of availability of the FMP amendment was published on November 3, 1992 (57 FR 49676), and the proposed rule was published on December 3, 1992. A notice of availability of the FEIS was published on December 11, 1992 (57 FR 58805). Ninety-two letters of comment were received on the proposed rule. After careful consideration of the comments, key issues raised during Council development of the IFQ program, the FEIS, and the public record, the Secretary, on January 29, 1993, approved the recommended IFQ program in its entirety.

Consistency With Magnuson Act and Halibut Act Provisions To Establish Limited Access Management Regimes

The Secretary is authorized by sections 304 and 305 of the Magnuson Act to approve and implement an FMP or FMP amendment recommended by the Council if the FMP or amendment is consistent with the national standards at section 301, other provisions of the Magnuson Act, and other applicable laws. One key provision of the Magnuson Act is section 303(b)(6), which specifies factors that the Council and the Secretary must consider in developing a limited access system. With respect to halibut, section 5(c) of the Halibut Act authorizes the Secretary to implement limited access regulations for the U.S. halibut fishery. Such regulations must be consistent with the Halibut Act and section 303(b)(6) of the Magnuson Act, and must not be in conflict with IPHC regulations. The following discussion reviews the Secretary's findings of consistency with these key statutory requirements.

National Standard 1

This national standard requires conservation and management measures to prevent overfishing while achieving, on a continuing basis, the optimum

yield (OY) from the fishery. Although separate issues, the prevention of overfishing and the achievement of OY are related. In effect, the most important limitation on the specification of OY is that management measures designed to achieve it must also prevent overfishing. "Overfishing" is defined in the NOAA Guidelines for Fishery Management Plans (Guidelines), 50 CFR part 602, as a level or rate of fishing mortality that jeopardizes the long-term capacity of a stock or stock complex to produce maximum sustainable yield on a continuing basis (§ 602.11(c)).

The Council has developed an objective and measurable definition of overfishing groundfish as required by the Guidelines. The Council annually specifies the total allowable catch (TAC) of sablefish to assure that harvesting up to its TAC does not cause overfishing of the sablefish stock. The IPHC follows a similar process in establishing the annual catch limits for halibut.

The IFQ program will not change the process by which the Council and the IPHC respectively establish the sablefish TACs and halibut catch limits, but rather will modify the distribution of harvesting allocations among fishermen. Therefore, the IFQ program sustains existing management measures that prevent overfishing. Further, the IFQ program will improve the prevention of overfishing by providing for reductions in bycatch and deadloss that normally increase with increased fishing effort in open access fisheries. The slower paced fishery that is anticipated under the IFQ program will reduce fishing mortality caused by lost fishing gear and bycatch because gear conflicts will be reduced with fewer fishermen operating over a longer season, and because fishermen will more carefully set and retrieve their gear to minimize their operating costs. The bycatch of halibut or sablefish in fixed gear fisheries for other species is reduced when fishermen who hold halibut or sablefish IFQ can land those species that would otherwise be discarded. The slower paced fishery also will enhance the ability of NMFS to prevent exceeding the overall TAC or catch limit because the individual landings of fish will be more closely monitored.

The achievement of OY is enhanced as a result of improvements in the prevention of overfishing. Reductions in wastage of fish from bycatch and deadloss are likely to produce increases in future yields. Fishing mortality of young, undersized fish results in a loss of the growth of those fish. This lost growth represents foregone future biomass and potential harvest. The reduction of such loss will increase the

benefits to the Nation in terms of potential food production, recreational opportunities, economic, social, and ecological factors. The IFQ program further optimizes the yield from these fisheries by addressing problems associated with allocation conflicts, gear conflicts, deadloss, bycatch loss, discard mortality, excess harvesting capacity, product wholesomeness, safety, economic stability, and rural coastal development of a small-boat fleet.

National Standard 2

National standard 2 requires conservation and management measures to be based on the best scientific information available. The analytical work and data sources queried in developing the IFQ program were extensive. As explained in the preamble to the proposed rule, a series of four separate analyses comprise the FEIS and were made available for public review over a period of two and a half years. This analytical work relied on the most current landings data, economic, social, and biological information available at the time of the analysis. Data sources are given in reference chapters of the FEIS and its component parts. In addition to the FEIS and the Council's record of debate and public comment, the Secretary considered information presented in comments on the FMP amendments and proposed rule. The Secretary is satisfied that a reasonably comprehensive record of data collection and analysis has been assembled and finds that the IFQ program is consistent with national standard 2.

National Standard 3

This standard requires an individual stock of fish to be managed, to the extent practicable, as a single unit throughout its range, and interrelated stocks of fish to be managed as a unit or in close coordination. The range of halibut and sablefish stocks extends from the northern limits of the BSAI, north and south of the Aleutian peninsula and islands, and throughout the GOA to the U.S.-Canada boundary at Dixon Entrance. These species are found also inside State (territorial sea and internal) waters and in the EEZ. They are found also in Canadian waters and in and off of the States of Washington and Oregon, which are outside the jurisdiction of the Council.

Although national standard 3 does not apply to the halibut IFQ program developed under the Halibut Act, this IFQ program will govern all commercial halibut fishing throughout the range of Pacific halibut in and off Alaska. This fishery accounts for 79.6 percent of the total commercial halibut fishery, based

eligibility criteria and the evaluation criteria set forth in paragraph (f) of this section have been met. The Secretary shall then approve or disapprove the Governor's recommendation within 45 days of its receipt. In the event of approval, the Secretary shall notify the Governor and the Council in writing that the Governor's recommendations for CDPs are consistent with the community eligibility conditions and evaluation criteria under paragraph (f) of this section and other applicable law, including the Secretary's reasons for approval. Publication of the decision, including the percentage of the sablefish and halibut CDQ reserves allocated to each CDP, and the availability of the findings will appear in the Federal Register. The Secretary will allocate no more than 12 percent of the sablefish CDQ reserve to any one applicant with an approved CDP. A community may not concurrently receive more than one halibut CDQ or more than one sablefish CDQ, and only one application for each type of CDP per community will be accepted.

(2) If the Secretary finds that the Governor's recommendations for halibut and sablefish CDQ allocations are not consistent with the criteria set forth in these regulations and disapproves the Governor's recommendations, the Secretary shall so advise the Governor and the Council in writing, including the reasons therefor. Publication of the decision will appear in the Federal Register. The CDP applicant may submit a revised CDP to the Governor for submission to the Secretary. Review by the Secretary of a revised CDP application will be in accordance with the provisions set forth in this section.

(f) *Evaluation criteria.* The Secretary will approve the Governor's recommendations for halibut and sablefish CDPs if the Secretary finds the CDPs are consistent with the requirements of this part, including the following:

(1) Each CDP application is submitted in compliance with the application procedures described in paragraph (d) of this section;

(2) Prior to approval of a CDP recommended by the Governor, the Secretary will review the Governor's findings as to how each community(ies) meet the following criteria for an eligible community in paragraphs (f)(2)(i), (ii), (iii), and (iv) of this section. The Secretary has determined that the communities listed in Table 1 of this section meet these criteria; however, communities that may be eligible to submit CDPs and receive halibut or sablefish CDQs are not limited to those listed in this table. For a community to

be eligible, it must meet the following criteria:

(i) The community must be located within 50 nautical miles from the baseline from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured along the Bering Sea coast from the Bering Strait to the most western of the Aleutian Islands, or on an island within the Bering sea. A community is not eligible if it is located on the coast of the Chukchi Sea or the Gulf of Alaska even if it is within 50 nautical miles of the baseline of the Bering Sea;

(ii) The community must be certified by the Secretary of the Interior pursuant to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. 1601 *et seq.*) to be a native village;

(iii) The residents of the community must conduct more than one-half of their current commercial or subsistence fishing effort in the waters surrounding the community; and

(iv) The community must not have previously developed harvesting or processing capability sufficient to support substantial groundfish fisheries participation in the BSAI, except if the community can show that benefits from an approved CDP would be the only way to realize a return from previous investments. The communities of Unalaska and Akutan are excluded under this provision;

(3) Each CDP application demonstrates that a qualified managing organization will be responsible for the harvest and use of the CDQ allocation pursuant to the CDP;

(4) Each CDP application demonstrates that its managing organization can effectively prevent exceeding the CDQ allocation;

(5) The Governor has found for each recommended CDP that:

(i) The CDP and the managing organization are fully described in the CDQ application, and have the ability to successfully meet the project milestones and schedule;

(ii) The managing organization has an adequate budget for implementing the CDP, and that the CDP is likely to be successful;

(iii) A qualified applicant has submitted the CDP application and that the applicant and managing organization have the support of each community participating in the proposed CDQ project as demonstrated through an official letter approved by the governing body of each such community; and

(iv) That the following factors have been considered:

(A) The number of individuals from applicant communities who will be

employed under the CDP, the nature of their work, and career advancement;

(B) The number and percentage of low-income persons residing in the applicant communities, and the economic opportunities provided to them through employment under the CDP;

(C) The number of communities cooperating in the application;

(D) The relative benefits to be derived by participating communities and the specific plans for developing a self-sustained fisheries economy; and

(E) The success or failure of the applicant and the managing organization in the execution of a prior CDP (e.g., exceeding a CDQ allocation or any other related violation may be considered a failure and may result in partially or fully precluding a CDP from a future CDQ allocation);

(6) For purposes of this paragraph (f), "qualified applicant" means:

(i) A local fishermen's organization from an eligible community, or group of eligible communities, that is incorporated under the laws of the State of Alaska, or under Federal law, and whose board of directors is composed of at least 75 percent resident fishermen of the community (or group of communities) that is making an application; or

(ii) A local economic development organization incorporated under the laws of the State of Alaska, or under Federal law, specifically for the purpose of designing and implementing a CDQ project, and that has a board of directors composed of at least 75 percent resident fishermen of the community (or group of communities) that is (are) making an application;

(7) For the purpose of this paragraph (f), "resident fisherman" means an individual with documented commercial or subsistence fishing activity who maintains a mailing address and permanent domicile in the community and is eligible to receive an Alaska Permanent Fund dividend at that address; and

(8) If a qualified applicant represents more than one community, the board of directors of the applicant must include at least one member from each of the communities represented.

(g) *Monitoring of CDPs.* (1) Approved CDPs for halibut and sablefish are required to submit annual reports to the Governor by June 30 of the year following CDQ allocation. At the conclusion of a CDP, a final report will be required to be submitted to the Governor by June 30 of the final year of CDQ allocation. Annual reports for CDPs will include information describing how the CDP has met its

will be optimized. However, enforcement of IFQ rules is critical to limit the extent to which highgrading and underreporting of harvests subtract from gains in yield.

Finally, consistency with national standard 4 requires avoidance of excessive shares. An allocation must be designed to avoid creating conditions that foster any person or other entity from acquiring an inordinate share of fishing privileges or control by buyers and sellers that would not otherwise exist (§ 602.14(c)(3)(iii)). Although the national standard guidelines do not specifically define an "excessive share," they imply conditions of monopoly or oligopoly. The Council was especially concerned with the effects of consolidation under the IFQ program on current participants and coastal communities. Therefore, the Council recommended a limit on ownership of 1 percent of the total quota share (QS) of sablefish for the BSAI and GOA. These limitations are area-specific for sablefish east of 140° W. longitude, and similar limits for halibut are area-specific. These limits are adopted by the Secretary and appear at § 676.22 (e) and (f) of the final rule. For reasons explained in the preamble to the proposed rule, these limits are imposed on the use of QS rather than its ownership. It is possible that these limits could be concentrated in a single area which could result in localized oligopsony for harvesting or processing. This would not, however, lead to overall market control of the fishery. In addition, a limit is imposed on the amount of QS that can be used on any single vessel (§ 676.22(b)). Finally, NOAA notes that the allocation scheme can be changed by the Council and the Secretary without permission of the QS or IFQ holders. Such a change may occur if the Council determines that the IFQ program in operation allows for too much or too little consolidation. Therefore, the IFQ program is consistent with national standard 4 with regard to excessive share.

National Standard 5

This standard requires conservation and management measures to promote efficiency in the use of fishery resources, where practicable, except that no such measure will have economic allocation as its sole purpose. The Guidelines recognize that, theoretically, an efficient fishery would harvest the OY with the minimum use of economic inputs such as labor, capital, interest, and fuel (§ 602.15(b)(2)). Hence, an efficient management regime conserves all resources, not just fish stocks. Implementing more efficient

management will change the distribution of benefits and burdens in a fishery if it involves the allocation of harvesting privileges. This standard mandates that any such redistribution should not occur without an increase in efficiency unless less efficient measures contribute to other social and biological objectives.

Although the requirements of national standard 5 do not apply to the halibut IFQ system developed pursuant to the Halibut Act, the Secretary finds that the entire IFQ program, including those measures developed for halibut, is consistent with this standard. This IFQ program provides fishermen an opportunity to reduce economic waste associated with overcapitalization, congested fishing grounds, and fishing mortality due to bycatch discard. Harvesting costs will be lowered because of reduced need for fishermen to carry redundant gear and reduced vessel operating costs (FEIS p. 2-6). The quality and value of fishery products will be increased (FEIS p. 2-4), and there will be increased permanent employment opportunities for crew members and processor workers in coastal communities (FEIS p. 2-12). Processing and marketing costs should decrease as the need to hold large amounts of processed fish in storage until sold is diminished (FEIS p. 2-6). Moreover, the replacement of short intensive fishing seasons with longer, predictable seasons will increase safety at sea and reduce the cost of human capital and equipment invested in the production of halibut and sablefish products. Greater efficiency may have been achieved; however, the Council minimized disruption to the current social fabric through various restrictions on the use and transfer of QS. The IFQ program also will provide biological benefits in terms of reduced discard and deadloss waste, and enhanced prevention of overfishing. These social and biological considerations indicate that economic allocation is not the sole purpose of the IFQ program.

National Standard 6

National standard 6 requires that management measures allow for variations among, and contingencies in, fisheries, fishery resources, and catches. Variations, uncertainties, and unforeseen circumstances can be experienced in the form of biological or environmental changes, or social, technological, and economic changes. Flexibility of a management regime is necessary to respond to such contingencies (§ 602.16 (b) and (c)).

Again, although the requirements of national standard 6 do not apply to the

halibut IFQ system developed pursuant to the Halibut Act, the Secretary finds the entire IFQ system, including measures developed under the Magnuson Act and the Halibut Act, is consistent with national standard 6. The IFQ program will not change the way in which the overall halibut and sablefish catch limits are determined. These catch limits respond to changes in stock conditions to the extent that they are based on annual biological estimates. However, the IFQ program provides for increased flexibility for fishermen to adjust their fishing effort to changes in biological or economic conditions. The IFQ program allows fishermen to fish when conditions are most favorable (to the fishermen) and to reduce fishing effort on halibut and sablefish when conditions are less favorable. Under current open access management, a fisherman who wants to participate in these fisheries to any extent is forced to participate during the relatively short fishing seasons, regardless of prevailing economic conditions. The IFQ program will enhance the ability of the fishery to respond to variations and contingencies

National Standard 7

This national standard requires management measures to minimize costs and avoid unnecessary duplication. Management measures should not impose unnecessary burdens on the economy, individuals, organizations, or governments (§ 602.17(c)).

The requirements of national standard 7 do not apply to halibut regulations developed pursuant to the Halibut Act. Nevertheless, the Secretary finds that this IFQ system, including those regulations developed under the Halibut Act, is consistent with national standard 7. The FEIS (p. 6-2) indicates that the IFQ program will increase administration and enforcement costs by about \$2.7 million per year, but that annual benefits will be at least \$30.1 million. In addition, a fisherman is afforded greater flexibility under the IFQ program by adjusting his QS holdings and determining when he will conduct fishing. Fishermen who choose to exit the fishery may receive economic benefit if they sell their QS harvest privilege. The burdens on fishermen who do not receive an initial allocation of QS and on society as employment patterns shift, and other transition costs, are discussed throughout the FEIS

Magnuson Act Section 303(b)(6)

Section 303(b)(6) of the Magnuson Act provides for the establishment of limited access management systems in order to achieve OY if, in developing

(g) If transferred QS would result in an IFQ that is greater than the use limits specified in paragraphs (e) and (f) of this section, then any necessary adjustment to the IFQ account based on such QS will be issued for only the maximum IFQ allowed under these limits.

(h) *Vessel limitations.* (1) No vessel may be used, during any fishing year, to harvest more than one-half percent (0.005) of the combined total catch limits of halibut for IFQ regulatory areas 2C, 3A, 3B, 4A, 4B, 4C, 4D, and 4E, except that, in IFQ regulatory area 2C, no vessel may be used to harvest more than 1 percent (0.01) of the halibut catch limit for this area; and

(2) No vessel may be used, during any fishing year, to harvest more than 1 percent (0.01) of the combined fixed gear TAC of sablefish for the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands IFQ regulatory areas, except that, in the IFQ regulatory area east of 140° west longitude, no vessel may be used to harvest more than 1 percent (0.01) of the fixed gear TAC of sablefish for this area.

(3) A person who receives an approved IFQ allocation of halibut or sablefish in excess of these limitations may nevertheless catch and retain all of that IFQ with a single vessel. However, two or more persons may not catch and retain their IFQs with one vessel in excess of these limitations.

(i) *Use of catcher vessel IFQ.* In addition to the requirements of paragraph (c) of this section, catcher vessel IFQ cards must be used only by the individual who holds the QS from which the associated IFQ is derived, except as provided in paragraph (i)(1) of this section.

(1) An individual who receives an initial allocation of catcher vessel QS does not have to be onboard and sign IFQ landing reports if that individual owns the vessel on which IFQ sablefish or halibut are harvested, and is represented on the vessel by a master employed by the individual who received the initial allocation of QS.

(2) The exemption provided in paragraph (i)(1) of this section does not apply to individuals who receive an initial allocation of catcher vessel QS for halibut in IFQ regulatory area 2C or for sablefish QS in the IFQ regulatory area east of 140° west longitude, and this exemption is not transferable.

(3) Catcher vessel IFQ may be used on a freezer vessel, provided no frozen or otherwise processed fish products are onboard at any time during a fishing trip on which catcher vessel IFQ is being used. A catcher vessel may not land any IFQ species as frozen or otherwise processed product. Processing of fish on

the same vessel that harvested those fish using catcher vessel QS is prohibited.

(j) *Use of catcher vessel IFQ by corporations and partnerships.* A corporation or partnership that receives an initial allocation of catcher vessel QS may use the IFQ resulting from that QS and any additional QS acquired within the limitations of this section provided the corporation or partnership owns the vessel on which its IFQ is used, and it is represented on the vessel by a master employed by the corporation or partnership that received the initial allocation of QS. This provision is not transferable and does not apply to catcher vessel QS for halibut in IFQ regulatory area 2C or for sablefish in the IFQ regulatory area east of 140° west longitude that is transferred to a corporation or partnership. Such transfers of additional QS within these areas must be to an individual pursuant to § 676.21(b) of this part and be used pursuant to paragraphs (c) and (i) of this section.

(1) A corporation or partnership, except for a publicly-held corporation, that receives an initial allocation of catcher vessel QS loses the exemption provided under paragraph (j) of this section on the effective date of a change in the corporation or partnership from that which existed at the time of initial allocation.

(2) For purposes of this paragraph, "a change in the corporation or partnership" means the addition of any new shareholder(s) or partner(s), except that a court appointed trustee to act on behalf of a shareholder or partner who becomes incapacitated is not a change in the corporation or partnership.

(3) The Regional Director must be notified of a change in a corporation or partnership as defined in this paragraph within 15 days of the effective date of the change. The effective date of change, for purposes of this paragraph, is the date on which the new shareholder(s) or partner(s) may realize any corporate liabilities or benefits of the corporation or partnership.

(4) Catcher vessel QS and IFQ resulting from that QS held in the name of a corporation or partnership that changes, as defined in this paragraph, must be transferred to an individual, as prescribed in § 676.21 of this part, before it may be used at any time after the effective date of the change.

§ 676.23 IFQ fishing season.

(a) The fishing period(s) for IFQ halibut are established by the IPHC and are specified at 50 CFR part 301. Catches of halibut by fixed gear at times other than during the specified fishing periods must be treated as prohibited

species as prescribed at §§ 672.20(e) and 675.20(c) of this chapter.

(b) Directed fishing for sablefish using fixed gear in any IFQ regulatory area may be conducted at any time during the period from 00:01 Alaska Local Time on March 1 through 24:00 Alaska Local Time on November 30. Catches of sablefish by fixed gear during other periods may be retained up to the directed fishing standards specified at §§ 672.20(g) and 675.20(h) of this chapter if an individual who holds a valid IFQ card and unused IFQ is onboard when the catch is made. Catches of sablefish in excess of the directed fishing standards and catches made without IFQ must be treated in the same manner as prohibited species.

§ 676.24 Western Alaska Community Development Quota Program.

(a) *Halibut CDQ Program.* The Secretary will annually withhold from IFQ allocation the proportions of the halibut catch limit that are specified in this paragraph for use as a CDQ. Portions of the CDQ for each specified IPHC regulatory area may be allocated for the exclusive use of an eligible western Alaska community in accordance with a CDP approved by the Governor in consultation with the Council and approved by the Secretary. The proportions of the halibut catch limit annually withheld for purposes of the CDQ program, exclusive of issued QS, are as follows for each area:

(1) In IPHC regulatory area 4B, 20 percent of the annual halibut quota shall be made available for the halibut CDQ program to eligible communities physically located in or proximate to this regulatory area. For the purposes of this section, "proximate to" an IPHC regulatory area means within 10 nautical miles from the point where the boundary of the IPHC regulatory area intersects land.

(2) In IPHC regulatory area 4C, 50 percent of the halibut quota shall be made available for the halibut CDQ program to eligible communities physically located in IPHC regulatory area 4C.

(3) In IPHC regulatory area 4D, 30 percent of the halibut quota shall be made available for the halibut CDQ program to eligible communities located in or proximate to IPHC regulatory areas 4D and 4E.

(4) In IPHC regulatory area 4E, 100 percent of the halibut quota shall be made available for the halibut CDQ program to communities located in or proximate to IPHC regulatory area 4E. A trip limit of 6,000 pounds (2.7 metric tons) will apply to halibut CDQ harvesting in IPHC regulatory area 4E.

gear fishing vessel owners who choose to hold no QS may use their fishing vessels in other fisheries. The potential effects on these other fisheries is discussed in the FEIS (sec. 4.0).

Cultural and social framework.

Development of the IFQ program has been controversial for the Council and the Secretary primarily because of changes this management policy can bring to the current cultural and social fabric of the fishery. A key concern of the Council was a means of providing for economic rationalization of the fishery while preventing undue cultural and social disruption. Frequent public comment to the Council on cultural and social aspects relevant to the fishery maintained the importance of these issues. The Council considered, described, and assessed relevant cultural and social issues in the FEIS.

Other relevant considerations. Vessel and crew safety was an important consideration in developing the IFQ program. The short and infrequent fishing seasons for halibut, especially in the GOA, often compel fishermen to risk their vessels and lives to fish in poor weather instead of waiting for the weather to clear and miss the fishery. This was one of the 10 problems identified by the Council and is characteristic of overcapitalized open access fisheries. The IFQ program will resolve this problem by allowing fishermen to choose when they will go fishing within a 9-month period. Fishing can be postponed due to poor weather conditions, if necessary, or when the crew is fatigued. Although the IFQ program will not prevent casualties at sea, it is designed in part to allow fishermen to make sensible judgments that will enhance their safety.

Changes From the Proposed Rule in the Final Rule

The IFQ program implemented by this rule is described at length in the proposed rule notice published on December 3, 1992. The principal parts of the program remain as discussed in that notice. These include initial allocation of QS, annual allocation of IFQ, transfer provisions, limitations on IFQ harvests and QS use, monitoring and enforcement provisions, and the western Alaska CDQ program. However, some changes from the proposed rule are made in the final rule in response to comments received. Changes made in response to comments received are addressed in "Response to Comments" below. Other changes are made to clarify the intent and effectiveness of the regulations and improve their parity with the language of the Council's December 8, 1991, motion approving the

IFQ program and the FMP amendment text for Amendments 15 and 20. Principal changes made for clarification purposes are as follows:

1. In accordance with the requirements of section 3507(f) of the Paperwork Reduction Act, § 204.1(b) is revised to include the display of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) control numbers assigned for the IFQ program.

2. Sections 672.2, 675.2, and paragraph 675.24(c)(1) are removed from the proposed rule. In addition, the term "fixed gear" in § 675.20(a)(3) is changed from the proposed rule to "hook-and-line and pot gear" and the definition of "fixed gear" in § 676.11 is changed from the proposed rule. These changes are necessary to clarify that the sablefish TAC allocation scheme is not changed by the IFQ program. Allocation of sablefish TAC between fishing gears began in the GOA in 1986 and in the BSAI in 1990 pursuant to approved amendments to the respective FMPs. For the GOA, the FMP and its implementing regulations at § 672.24(c) specifically divides the sablefish TAC between hook-and-line gear and trawl gear. These two gear types are defined at § 672.2. Pot gear and other types of gear comprised of hooks and lines (e.g., hand lines, jig, or troll gear) are specifically not allowed to retain sablefish. In the BSAI, the FMP and its implementing regulations at § 675.24(c) divides the sablefish TAC between hook-and-line and pot gears and trawl gear. Again, other gear types are not allowed to retain sablefish. However, the FMP amendment text for the IFQ program indicates that the program is applicable to the "fixed gear" fishery and defines "fixed gear" as including all hook-and-line fishing gears, including longline, jigs, handlines, troll gear, etc., and pot gear in the BSAI. For consistency with the proposed FMP amendment text, the proposed rule defined "fixed gear" as all groundfish pot gear and hook-and-line gear, including longline, jigs, handlines, troll gear, subject to other gear restrictions in parts 672 and 675. This language would have allowed for the exclusion of pot gear in the GOA, for example, but it also would have required changing the sablefish TAC allocation regulations from the specific "hook-and-line gear" (and pot gear in the BSAI) to the more general "fixed gear." NOAA has determined that such a regulatory change, as contemplated in the proposed rule, would require FMP amendments in addition to the amendments implemented by this final rule; this is because the provisions of the current FMPs that allocate the

sablefish TAC among gear types explicitly do not include jigs, handlines, and troll gear (and pot gear in the GOA) and were not modified by these amendments. Hence, the revised "fixed gear" definition in the final rule more clearly specifies which gear types are affected by the IFQ program and is more consistent with existing FMP requirements on TAC allocation.

The fixed gear definition with respect to halibut includes jigs, handlines, and troll gear in addition to the common setline or hook-and-line gear. This difference between sablefish and halibut fisheries results from the more general "hook-and-line gear" specified at § 301.17 as required for the harvesting of halibut. This regulation allows any gear that uses hooks and lines to harvest halibut. Hence, jigs, handlines, and troll gear that employ hooks and lines can be used to land halibut under the IFQ program. Another simplifying factor is that the halibut catch limit is not specifically allocated between trawl and other gear types.

3. The definition of "catcher vessel" is changed by making an exception for a freezer vessel that acts as a catcher vessel during a fishing trip. This change clarifies § 676.22(i)(3) which allows the use of catcher vessel IFQ on a freezer vessel provided that no processed products of any species are onboard the vessel during a fishing trip on which catcher vessel IFQ is being used. This change also improves the distinction between the two types of vessels based on whether processing occurs during a fishing trip or during a fishing year.

4. The definition of "dockside sale" is moved to the definitions section (§ 676.11) from § 676.14(d) because the term is used also in other paragraphs. The definition is revised to clarify that dockside sales are transfers of IFQ fish from the harvester to individuals for personal consumption, and not for resale. Such transfers to non-registered buyers will require the harvester to hold a registered buyer permit in addition to an IFQ permit and card. Further, the text of §§ 676.13(a)(2) and 676.14(d) is revised to clarify the conditions under which registered buyer permits will be necessary, and indicate that landings of IFQ fish outside of an IFQ regulatory area or the State of Alaska must be treated in the same manner as a dockside sale. These changes are made to clarify the requirements of dockside sales and IFQ landings outside of an IFQ regulatory area or the State of Alaska. The changes also clarify the reporting requirements of registered buyers.

5. The definition of the sablefish CDQ reserve is changed to reflect the correct proportion of the sablefish fixed gear

halibut or sablefish made by that person if, at any time during their most recent year of participation, that person used more than one vessel in different categories.

(7) A qualified person's QS for both species will be assigned to the vessel category in which groundfish were landed in the most recent year of participation if, at any time during that year, that person landed halibut in one vessel category and sablefish in a different vessel category.

(8) A qualified person's halibut QS will be assigned to the vessel category in which groundfish were landed, or vessel categories in proportion to the total fixed gear landings of groundfish, if, at any time during the most recent year of participation, that person's vessel(s) makes no landing(s) of halibut.

(9) A qualified person's sablefish QS will be assigned to the vessel category in which halibut and groundfish were landed, or vessel categories in proportion to the total fixed gear landings of halibut and groundfish, if, at any time during the most recent year of participation, that person's vessel(s) makes no landing(s) of sablefish.

(d) *Application for initial QS.* Upon request, the Regional Director shall make available to any person an application form for an initial allocation of QS. The application form sent to the person requesting a QS allocation will include all data on that person's vessel ownership and catch history of halibut and sablefish that can be released to the applicant under current state and Federal confidentiality rules, and that are available to the Regional Director at the time of the request. An application period of no less than 180 days will be specified by notice in the Federal Register and other information sources that the Regional Director deems appropriate. Complete applications received by the Regional Director will be acknowledged. An incomplete application will be returned to the applicant with specific kinds of information identified that are necessary to make it complete.

(1) Halibut and sablefish catch history, vessel ownership or lease data, and other information supplied by an applicant will be compared with data compiled by the Regional Director. If additional data presented in an application are not consistent with the data compiled by the Regional Director, the applicant will be notified of insufficient documentation. The applicant will have 90 days to submit corroborating documents (as specified at paragraph (a)(1) of this section) in support of his/her application or to resubmit a revised application. All

applicants will be limited to one opportunity to provide corroborating documentation or a revised application in response to a notice of insufficient documentation.

(2) Uncontested data in applications will be approved by the Regional Director. Based on these data, the Regional Director will calculate each applicant's initial halibut and sablefish QS, as provided at paragraph (b) of this section, for each IFQ regulatory area, respectively, and will add each applicant's halibut and sablefish QS for an IFQ regulatory area to the respective QS pool for that area.

(3) Any applicant's catch history or other data that are contested by the Regional Director or another applicant will prevent approval of QS amounts that would result from the contested data until discrepancies are resolved. Amounts of QS will not be added to the QS pool for any IFQ regulatory area until they are approved by the Regional Director.

(e) *Appeal of initial allocation.* Initial action on allocation of QS must be appealed, pursuant to § 676.25 of this part, within 90 days of the date any allocation is issued or denied following the process described in paragraph (d) of this section.

(f) *Annual allocation of IFQ.* The Regional Director shall assign halibut or sablefish IFQs to each person holding approved halibut or sablefish QS, respectively, up to the limits prescribed at § 676.22 (e) and (f) of this part. Each assigned IFQ will be specific to an IFQ regulatory area and vessel category, and will represent the maximum amount of halibut or sablefish that may be harvested from the specified IFQ regulatory area and by the person to whom it is assigned during the specified fishing year, unless the IFQ assignment is changed by the Regional Director within the fishing year because of an approved transfer or because all or part of the IFQ is sanctioned for violating rules of this part.

(1) The annual allocation of IFQ to any person (person p) in any IFQ regulatory area (area a) will be equal to the product of the total allowable catch of halibut or sablefish by fixed gear for that area (after adjustment for purposes of the Western Alaska Community Development Quota Program) and that person's QS divided by the QS pool for that area. Overages will be subtracted from a person's IFQ pursuant to § 676.17 of this part. Expressed algebraically, the annual IFQ allocation formula is as follows:

$$IFQ_{pa} = [(fixed\ gear\ TAC_a - CDQ\ reserve_a) \times (QS_p / QS\ pool_a)] - \text{overage of } IFQ_{pa}.$$

(2) For purposes of calculating IFQs for any fishing year, the amount of a person's QS and the amount of the QS pool for any IFQ regulatory area will be the amounts on record with the Alaska Region, NMFS, as of noon, Alaska local time, on January 31 of that year.

(3) The Regional Director shall issue to each QS holder, pursuant to § 676.13 of this part, an IFQ permit accompanied by a statement specifying the maximum amount of halibut and sablefish that may be harvested with fixed gear in a specified IFQ regulatory area and vessel category as of January 31 of that year. Such IFQ permits will be sent by certified mail to each QS holder at the address on record for that person after the beginning of each fishing year but prior to the start of the annual IFQ fishing season.

(g) Quota shares allocated or permits issued pursuant to this part do not represent either an absolute right to the resource or any interest that is subject to the "takings" provision of the Fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Rather, such quota shares or permits represent only a harvesting privilege that may be revoked or amended subject to the requirements of the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act and other applicable law.

§ 676.21 Transfer of QS and IFQ.

Any person that is allocated QS or IFQ, either initially or by subsequent approved transfer, may sell, lease, or otherwise transfer all or part of their QS or IFQ to another person only in accordance with the transfer restrictions and procedures described in this section.

(a) The QS and IFQ assigned to any vessel category is not transferrable to any other vessel category.

(b) The QS assigned to any catcher vessel category may be transferred only to individuals who are U.S. citizens and IFQ crew members or to persons that receive an initial allocation of catcher vessel QS, except that only individuals may receive transferred catcher vessel QS for halibut in IFQ regulatory area 2C or for sablefish in the IFQ regulatory area east of 140° west longitude. An initial allocation of catcher vessel QS to an individual may be transferred to a solely-owned corporation that is owned by the same individual.

(c) The Regional Director must be notified of any transfer of QS or IFQ by inheritance, court order, security agreement, or other operation of law. Any person that receives QS in this

19. Compensations of additional halibut and sablefish QS for amounts foregone due to the CDQ program are clarified by making two changes in § 676.24(i) (formerly § 676.25(i)). First, "IFQ" is changed to "QS." This change improves consistency with the text of the Council's motion. Also, this change should make calculation of the compensation faster because the calculation would be based on the QS pool as of January 31 instead of waiting for final TAC specifications on which to base IFQ calculations. Second, a new paragraph (i)(3) is added to clarify that the compensation will occur only once, in the first year of fishing under the IFQ program, and it will be based on the QS pool in each IFQ regulatory area as of January 31 of the first year of fishing under the IFQ program. These are the same QS pool amounts that will be used for calculating IFQs that year pursuant to § 676.20(f)(2).

20. Explanations for additional changes to the final rule's regulatory text from the proposed rule may be found throughout the Response to Comments section.

Response to Comments

The IFQ program has been controversial in its development, review, and approval primarily because it will fundamentally change the current method of managing the halibut and sablefish fisheries and will limit access to them. Hence, public testimony and comment to the Council, NMFS, and the Secretary has been voluminous. Comments received on the draft SEIS/EIS are summarized and responded to in the FSEIS/EIS. The following summary includes only those comments on the proposed rule that were received by the comment deadline of January 11, 1993. Of these, 49 letters from 62 individuals expressed support for the proposed action while 30 letters from 32 individuals were opposed. Some letters in each category also included attachments of other letters, petitions, and news articles. Points raised in the attachments generally reiterated or reinforced the points made in the letters to which they were attached. Another 13 letters expressed neither support nor opposition but made technical comments or recommended certain changes in the regulations. This group of letters includes several that responded to an expressed interest by the Secretary in comments on efficiency constraints proposed by the Council. Letters of support and opposition also made specific recommendations for change.

Comment 1: The IFQ proposal intends to allocate publicly-owned common

property to a limited class of fishermen, and to use public tax dollars to fund the administration of this program for the benefit of these special interests. The Magnuson Act should be amended to provide the public with a fair return on the public fishery resources to avoid unnecessary windfall profits to a few at great cost to the public. All industries must pay for their raw materials in producing any product for profit. The fishing industry's raw materials are the public's fish which currently are free. The fishing industry should pay the public for the use of its resources and their management.

Response: Neither the Magnuson Act nor the Halibut Act provides authority to charge resource user fees or rents. In the coming months, NOAA will be participating in a broad review of user fees or rents, which will include evaluation of alternatives for applying them in appropriate fisheries. This could result in charging fees for initial and subsequent allocations of QS, IFQ, or landings, or any combination of these, in the sablefish and halibut fisheries. NOAA will seek the views of interested parties during this review. While the IFQ program will benefit the Nation, and is consistent with current law, public benefits can be increased from resource user fees or rents.

Comment 2: The IFQ program is the only alternative that addresses all ten problems identified by the Council. The IFQ program offers the best chance of solving current industry problems including safety, marketing, and overcapitalization. No other alternative better solves the problems of resource waste, overcrowding, product quality, safety, and bycatch. Problems of discarding, and gear conflict should be resolved by the IFQ program while increasing economic benefits and improving biological conservation. Open access and traditional management techniques are not working. The IFQ program is based on free-market principles commonly used in the private sector; it is a pro-business plan. Current management results in extremely short fishing seasons which are dangerous and wasteful. The IFQ program would reduce waste of bycatch, fuel, fishing gear, ice, cold storage, and loss of life at sea. The program has been thoroughly analyzed and benefits from ample public review and participation in its design over the past 5 years. The unsafe fishing conditions that fishermen are forced to endure as a result of extremely short openings is a critical flaw of current management. Fisheries management should take responsibility for the safety and welfare of fishermen affected by regulations in addition to

conservation and management of the fishery. The program will increase economic benefits from the fisheries and improve biological conservation by making the fisheries easier to manage. Consumers will benefit by having a steady supply of fresh fish to the market. The program is rational; initial allocations reward participation in the fisheries proportionately. Fishermen will have a personal stake in the fishery under the IFQ program which will foster a stewardship attitude toward the resources and their environment. Similar IFQ-type programs have proven successful in other fisheries. The IFQ program should be approved in its entirety. There should be no partial disapproval of transfer restrictions as these are necessary to mitigate socio-economic impacts that will occur if historic delivery patterns are disrupted or the traditionally diverse fleet is displaced. Further prevention of excessive fleet consolidation may be needed.

Response: Comment noted. NOAA agrees with most of these points and supports the IFQ program. However, limited access regimes are not appropriate for all problems affecting the fishing industry. Some traditional management measures will continue to be used and others may be necessary to prevent overfishing or other conservation problems if the IFQ program is not adequately addressing such problems.

Comment 3: Adoption of the IFQ plan will result in lost jobs for up to 12,000 fishermen in the halibut fleet and 2,600 fishermen in the sablefish fleet. It is unlikely that all of these fishermen will be able to move to other fisheries. The impact of such job loss on communities and fishing-related industries is not fully addressed.

Response: The Council and the Secretary carefully assessed the potential social and economic effects of this IFQ system. Although the number of employment opportunities fishing for and processing halibut and sablefish are likely to decrease with the intended consolidation of the fleet, the fishing and processing positions that remain should be more secure and better paid. The fishing seasons in the halibut and sablefish fisheries currently are so short that most fishermen cannot depend on them for full-time employment. There is little employment security in the halibut and sablefish fisheries currently under open access management. Extremely short fishing seasons under open access force vessel owners and processing plant operators to rely more on part-time transient labor instead of full-time resident labor. Stability in the

application, or statement required under this part;

(b) Intentionally submit false information on any report, application, or statement required under this part;

(c) Retain halibut or sablefish caught with fixed gear without a valid IFQ permit and without an IFQ card in the name of an individual onboard;

(d) Except as provided at § 676.17 of this part, retain IFQ halibut or IFQ sablefish on a vessel in excess of the total amount of unharvested IFQ, applicable to the vessel category and IFQ regulatory area in which the vessel is operating, and that is currently held by all IFQ card holders onboard the vessel;

(e) Possess, buy, sell, or transport IFQ halibut or IFQ sablefish harvested or landed in violation of any provision of this part;

(f) Make an IFQ landing without an IFQ card in the name of the individual making the landing;

(g) Possess on a vessel or land IFQ sablefish concurrently with non-IFQ sablefish, except that CDQ sablefish may be possessed on a vessel and landed concurrently with IFQ sablefish;

(h) Discard Pacific cod or rockfish that are taken when IFQ halibut or IFQ sablefish are onboard unless Pacific cod or rockfish are required to be discarded under §§ 672.20 or 675.20 of this chapter or unless, in waters within the State of Alaska, Pacific cod or rockfish are required to be discarded by laws of the State of Alaska;

(i) Transfer QS or IFQ (other than by operation of law) without the prior written approval of the Regional Director;

(j) Harvest on any vessel more IFQ halibut or IFQ sablefish than are authorized under § 676.22 of this part;

(k) Make an IFQ landing other than directly to (or by) a registered buyer;

(l) Discard halibut or sablefish caught with fixed gear from any catcher vessel when any IFQ card holder onboard holds unused halibut or sablefish IFQ for that vessel category and the IFQ regulatory area in which the vessel is operating unless discard:

(1) Of halibut is required under 50 CFR part 301;

(2) Of sablefish is required under 50 CFR 672.20 or 675.20 or, in waters within the State of Alaska, discard of sablefish is required under laws of the State of Alaska; or

(3) Of halibut or sablefish is required under other provisions of this part;

(m) Make an IFQ landing without prior notice of landing and before 6 hours after such notice, except as provided at § 676.14(a) of this part;

(n) Sell or otherwise transfer catcher vessel IFQ except as provided at § 676.21 of this part;

(o) Operate a vessel as catcher vessel and a freezer vessel during the same fishing trip;

(p) Participate in a Western Alaska Community Development Quota program in violation of § 676.24 of this part, submit information that is false or inaccurate with a CDP application or request for an amendment, or exceed a CDQ as defined at § 676.11 of this part; and

(q) Violate any other provision of this part.

§ 676.17 Facilitation of enforcement and monitoring.

In addition to the requirements of §§ 620.8 and 676.14 of this chapter, an IFQ landing must comply with the provisions described in this section.

(a) **Vessel clearance.** Any person that makes an IFQ landing at any location other than in an IFQ regulatory area or in the State of Alaska must be a registered buyer, obtain pre-landing written clearance of the vessel on which the IFQ halibut or IFQ sablefish are transported to the IFQ landing location, and provide an estimated weight of IFQ halibut and IFQ sablefish onboard to the clearing officer. For vessels obtaining clearance at a port in Alaska, clearance must be obtained prior to departing waters in or adjacent to the State of Alaska. For vessels obtaining clearance at a port in Washington or another state, the vessel must report to NMFS, Alaska Region, the estimated weight of the IFQ halibut and IFQ sablefish onboard and the intended date and time the vessel will obtain clearance at the port in Washington or another state. Such reports must be submitted to NMFS, Alaska Region, prior to departing waters in or adjacent to the State of Alaska, and in the manner prescribed by the registered buyer permit.

(1) Any person requesting a vessel clearance must have valid IFQ and registered buyer permits and one or more valid IFQ cards onboard that indicate that IFQ holdings are equal to or greater than all IFQ halibut and IFQ sablefish onboard, and must report the intended date, time, and location of IFQ landing.

(2) Any person granted a vessel clearance must submit an IFQ landing report, required under § 676.14 of this part, for all IFQ halibut, IFQ sablefish, and products thereof that are onboard the vessel at the first landing of any fish from the vessel.

(3) A vessel seeking clearance is subject to inspection of all fish, log books, permits, and other documents

onboard the vessel, at the discretion of the clearing officer.

(4) Unless specifically authorized on a case-by-case basis, vessel clearances will be issued only by NMFS enforcement officers at any of the following primary ports (geographic location descriptions reserved):

Akutan
Bellingham
Cordova
Craig
Dutch Harbor/Unalaska
Excursion Inlet
Homer
Ketchikan
King Cove
Kodiak
Pelican
Petersburg
St. Paul
Sand Point
Seward
Sitka
Yakutat

(b) **Overages.** Any person allocated IFQ must not harvest halibut or sablefish using fixed gear in any amount greater than the amount indicated under that person's current IFQ permit. Any person that harvests IFQ halibut or IFQ sablefish must hold sufficient unused IFQ for the harvest before beginning a fishing trip. Any IFQ halibut or IFQ sablefish that is harvested or landed in excess of a specified IFQ will be considered an "IFQ overage." In addition to any penalties that may be assessed for exceeding an IFQ, the Regional Director will deduct an amount equal to the overage from IFQ allocated in the year following determination of the overage. This overage adjustment to the annual IFQ allocation will be specific to each IFQ regulatory area for which an IFQ is calculated, and will apply to any person to whom the affected IFQ is allocated in the year following determination of an overage. In addition, the landed value of overages of the amount specified under the IFQ permit of 5 percent or more shall be subject to forfeiture. Unharvested amounts of IFQ in any year or IFQ regulatory area will not be reallocated.

§ 676.18 Penalties.

Any person committing, or a fishing vessel used in the commission of, a violation of the Magnuson Act or Halibut Act or any regulation issued under the Magnuson Act or Halibut Act, is subject to the civil and criminal penalty provisions and civil forfeiture provisions of the Magnuson Act or Halibut Act, to part 621 of this chapter, to 15 CFR part 904 (Civil Procedures), and to other applicable law. Penalties include but are not limited to

Comment 8: The IFQ program does not privatize ownership rights to individual fish stocks but only to the right to harvest certain species. Therefore, the "race-for-fish" problem is not solved but limited only to a privileged and protected group.

Response: Under open access and license limitation programs, all fishermen harvest fish from the overall catch quota. Therefore, fishermen who harvest faster harvest more fish than slower fishermen by the time the common quota is reached and authorities close the fishery. Under the IFQ program, fishermen, limited by their individual quotas, need not race for a share of the total quota. Instead, they can direct their efforts at reducing the cost of their operations and improving product quality.

Comment 9: The claim that ownership of harvesting rights will promote stewardship of the resource is not true. The long-term detrimental effects of abusive behavior are shared by all industry participants, not just the abusive individual, thereby reducing incentive for an individual to take responsibility for his own behavior.

Response: Fishermen who hold QS have an individual interest in the halibut or sablefish resource. Individual behavior that degrades that interest, such as underreporting or discarding dead fish that should be counted against an IFQ, could adversely affect the harvesting potential of QS or the future value of QS when the QS holder decides to leave the fishery. As abusive behavior is more likely to be noticed by other fishermen than by the Government, the IFQ program is expected to foster a cooperative effort in enforcing the IFQ rules. Fishermen who invest in the fishery by buying QS will more likely hold a long-term view of their industry and seek to recapture their investment costs and make a reasonable profit year after year. An open access fishery, on the other hand, inspires a short-term perspective because investment or entry costs are relatively low and the costs of resource abuse are spread over a large number of fishermen. Consolidation of the fleet under the IFQ program will increase the cost of resource abuse to individuals remaining in the fishery. The IFQ program will likely inspire more individual responsibility for resource stewardship, not less. Furthermore, it is conceivable that the underreporting by one IFQ holder that potentially causes the TAC to be exceeded in one fishing year could result in a decreased TAC and correspondingly lower IFQs the following year.

Comment 10: Initial allocation of fishing privileges to "present participants" is only indirectly related to present participation. Fishers' catch history is only the outcome of their participation (i.e., the score of the game). Investment in the fisheries, for example, is more indicative of participation.

Response: The Magnuson Act and the Halibut Act require the Council and the Secretary to take present participation in, and dependence on, the fishery into account in developing limited access systems. The Council chose to use catch history over a specified period of time as an indicator of present participation in, and dependence on, the fishery. NOAA agrees that a person's catch history provides a reasonable indication of that person's participation in, and dependence on, the fishery. Investment also may be an indication of these factors, but investment data would be more cumbersome to use and verify because of difficulties in acquiring and interpreting such data.

Comment 11: The initial allocation to those who invest (in fishing vessels) would unfairly allocate a valuable asset to relatively few fishermen and businessmen who own vessels to the exclusion of the vast majority of fishermen who crew and operate the vessels. This would make vessel owners and lease holders "fishermen" regardless of their participation in the fishing activity of their vessel. Crew members and captains who actually fished would be excluded from receipt of QS regardless of the years of personal investment they have as real fishermen. By discriminating between fishermen who are vessel owners and fishermen who are crew members, the IFQ program would violate the Halibut Act which strictly prohibits discrimination between any fishermen, not just fishermen from different states. Moreover, it would effectively redefine "fishermen" as "investors" and would violate national standard 4 of the Magnuson Act and the Halibut Act, which require allocations to be fair and equitable to all fishermen. Financial investment in the fishery should not be the only criterion for getting QS.

Response: The Council chose vessel ownership or lease as a criterion for initial allocation of QS because of the financial risk that such persons assume in undertaking a commercial fishing enterprise. Persons who bear this financial risk are the persons who make the decision of whether to enter or exit a fishery and affect the amount of capital in a fishery (see response to comment 13). However, financial investment in a fishing vessel is not the

only criterion for receiving an initial allocation of QS. Vessel owners or lease holders also must demonstrate that halibut or sablefish were landed by their vessels during certain years. No investment in a fishing vessel is required to receive transferred QS. Neither term "fishermen" nor "investor" is defined in the Magnuson Act or the Halibut Act. For allocation purposes, a vessel owner or lease holder is a "fisherman" as much as a person who physically handles fishing gear and fish. The Magnuson Act and the Halibut Act authorize such allocations, but stipulate that they be fair and equitable, reasonably calculated to promote conservation, and carried out in a manner such that no particular individual, corporation, or other entity acquires an excessive share. The Guidelines at 50 CFR 602.14(c) help interpret these criteria. An "allocation" or "assignment" of fishing privileges is defined as a direct and deliberate distribution of the opportunity to participate in a fishery among identifiable, discrete user groups or individuals (§ 602.14(c)(1)). The advantaging of one group to the detriment of another is inherent in an allocation. Allocations do not have to preserve the status quo in a fishery to qualify as "fair and equitable." This criterion can be satisfied if the allocation is rationally connected with the achievement of OY or with the furtherance of FMP objectives, and if the hardship imposed on one group is outweighed by the total net benefits to all. The Council's decision to allocate QS initially to vessel owners and lease holders who made landings of halibut and sablefish during certain years and not to any other U.S. fishermen satisfies this criterion as discussed above under national standards 1 and 4. This allocation promotes conservation and the achievement of OY by encouraging a more rational use of the resource and optimizing the market value of the yield. Net benefits to the Nation are evident from the FEIS (see summary of costs and benefits in FEIS sec. 6.0). Finally, the IFQ rules developed by the Council sufficiently prevent the acquisition of an excessive share either in the initial allocation or subsequent transfer of QS. Therefore, the initial allocation of QS to vessel owners and lease holders and not to crew members is consistent with the anti-discrimination provisions of the Magnuson Act and Halibut Act.

Comment 12: The proposed requirement for an initial allocation of QS does not take into account present participation. It would exclude vessel

(3) With respect to Pacific halibut harvested from any IFQ regulatory area, all fishing gear comprised of lines with hooks attached, including setline gear as that term is defined at 50 CFR part 301.

Freezer vessel means any vessel that is used to process some or all of its catch during any fishing trip.

Governor means the Governor of the State of Alaska.

Halibut CDQ Reserve means the amount of the halibut catch limit for IPHC regulatory areas 4B, 4C, 4D, and 4E that is reserved for the halibut CDQ program.

Harvesting or to harvest, as used in this part, means the catching and retaining of any fish.

IFQ crew member means any individual who has at least 150 days experience working as part of the harvesting crew in any United States commercial fishery, or any individual who receives an initial allocation of QS. For purposes of this definition, "harvesting" means work that is directly related to the catching and retaining of fish. Work in support of harvesting but not directly involved with harvesting is not considered harvesting crew work. For example, searching for fish, work on a fishing vessel only as an engineer, or cook, or work preparing a vessel for a fishing trip would not be considered work of a harvesting crew.

IFQ halibut means any Pacific halibut (*Hippoglossus stenolepis*) that is harvested with fixed gear in any IFQ regulatory area.

IFQ landing, as used in this part, means the unloading or transferring of any IFQ halibut, IFQ sablefish, or products thereof from the vessel that harvested such fish.

IFQ regulatory area, as used in this part, means:

(1) With respect to IFQ halibut, areas 2C, 3A, 3B, 4A, 4B, 4C, 4D, or 4E defined at 50 CFR part 301; and

(2) With respect to IFQ sablefish, any of the three regulatory areas in the Gulf of Alaska defined at § 672.2 of this chapter, and any subarea of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area defined at § 675.2 of this chapter, and all waters of the State of Alaska between the shore and the inshore boundary of such regulatory areas and subareas, except waters of Prince William Sound and areas in which sablefish fishing is managed under a State of Alaska limited entry program.

IFQ sablefish means any sablefish (*Anoplopoma fimbria*) that is harvested with fixed gear either in the EEZ off Alaska or in waters of the State of Alaska by persons holding an IFQ permit, but does not include sablefish harvested in Prince William Sound or

under a State of Alaska limited entry program.

Individual means a natural person who is not a corporation, partnership, association, or other such entity.

Individual fishing quota (IFQ) means the annual catch limit of sablefish or halibut that may be harvested by a person who is lawfully allocated a harvest privilege for a specific portion of the total allowable catch of sablefish or halibut.

IPHC means the International Pacific Halibut Commission.

Person, as used in this part, means any individual who is a citizen of the United States or any corporation, partnership, association, or other entity (or their successor in interest), whether or not organized or existing under the laws of any state, that is a United States citizen.

Quota share (QS) means a permit, the face amount of which is used as a basis for the annual calculation of a person's IFQ.

Sablefish CDQ Reserve means 20 percent of the sablefish fixed gear TAC for each subarea in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area for which a sablefish TAC is specified.

Trip, as used in this part, means the period of time from when a vessel commences fishing until either the vessel enters or leaves an IFQ regulatory area, or the commencement of an IFQ landing, whichever occurs first.

United States citizen, as used in this part, means:

(1) Any individual who is a citizen of the United States at the time of application for QS; or

(2) Any corporation, partnership, association, or other entity that would have qualified to document a fishing vessel as a vessel of the United States during the QS qualifying years of 1988, 1989, and 1990.

§ 676.12 Relation to other laws.

(a) *Foreign fishing.* Regulations governing foreign fishing for groundfish in the Gulf of Alaska are set forth at 50 CFR 611.92. Regulations governing foreign fishing for groundfish in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands area are set forth at 50 CFR 611.93.

(b) *Halibut fishing.* Additional regulations governing the conservation and management of Pacific halibut are set forth at 50 CFR part 301.

(c) *Domestic fishing for groundfish.* Additional regulations governing the conservation and management of groundfish in the EEZ of the Gulf of Alaska and the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands area are set forth at 50 CFR parts 672 and 675, respectively, and at 50 CFR part 620. Persons fishing for

sablefish in the territorial sea and internal waters of the State of Alaska also should consult pertinent regulations of the State.

§ 676.13 Permits.

(a) *General.* (1) In addition to the permit and licensing requirements prescribed at 50 CFR parts 301, 672, 675, all fishing vessels that harvest IFQ halibut or IFQ sablefish must have onboard:

(i) A copy of an IFQ permit that specifies the IFQ regulatory area and vessel category in which IFQ halibut or IFQ sablefish may be harvested by the IFQ permit holder and a copy of the most recent accompanying statement specifying the amount of each species that may be harvested during the current IFQ fishing season; and

(ii) An original IFQ card issued by the Regional Director.

(2) Any person who receives IFQ halibut or IFQ sablefish from the person(s) that harvested the fish must possess a registered buyer permit, except under conditions of paragraphs (a)(2)(i), (ii), or (iii) of this section. A registered buyer permit also is required of any person who harvests IFQ halibut or IFQ sablefish and transfers such fish:

(i) In a dockside sale;

(ii) Outside of an IFQ regulatory area;

or

(iii) Outside the State of Alaska.

(b) *Issuance.* (1) IFQ permits and cards will be renewed or issued annually by the Regional Director to each person with approved QS for IFQ halibut or IFQ sablefish allocated in accordance with § 676.20 of this part. Each IFQ permit issued by the Regional Director will identify the permitted person and will be accompanied by a statement that specifies the amount of IFQ halibut or IFQ sablefish that person may harvest from a specified IFQ regulatory area using fixed gear and a vessel of a specified vessel category. Each IFQ card issued by the Regional Director will display an IFQ permit number and the individual authorized by the IFQ permit holder to land IFQ halibut or IFQ sablefish for debit against the permit holder's IFQ.

(2) Registered buyer permits will be renewed or issued annually by the Regional Director to persons that have a registered buyer application approved by the Regional Director.

(c) *Duration.* (1) An IFQ permit authorizes the person identified on the permit to harvest IFQ halibut or IFQ sablefish from a specified IFQ regulatory area at any time during an open fishing season during the fishing year for which the IFQ permit is issued until the amount harvested is equal to the

are economically dependent on this large fleet of small family-owned fishing vessels. The IFQ program would destroy the small-scale family fishing business in Alaska the same way big agribusiness is forcing the small family farms out of business. It would undermine the economic base of most of Alaskan coastal communities, deny access to citizens who live closest to the fishery resources, and put thousands of fishermen and shore plant workers along the Alaskan (Gulf) coast out of work. Seldovia will be finished as a fishing port if halibut and sablefish can't be landed there. Many years ago, the fleet was smaller and comprised of larger vessels based predominantly in the State of Washington. The IFQ plan is an attempt to tear the social fabric of Alaskan coastal communities and make the present culture fit the memories of the former fleet owners. Potential impacts of the IFQ plan on Alaska coastal communities involved in these fisheries dictate a need to do additional detailed studies before the plan goes into effect.

Response: The IFQ program is intended to achieve OY by resolving 10 conservation and management problems identified by the Council in 1989. Although the program will limit access to these fisheries, the Council incorporated measures to prevent undue disruption of the economic and social structure of Alaskan coastal communities. Landings of halibut and sablefish under the IFQ program can be made at any port. There is no requirement (except in § 676.14(e) pertaining to transshipment of processed IFQ fish) that prevents landing these species at Seldovia or any other port in or outside of Alaska. The potential effects of the IFQ program and alternatives were studied and taken into consideration by the Council and the Secretary. Social and cultural aspects of the halibut and sablefish fixed gear fisheries are considered and described in several sections of the FEIS. Most notably, the analysis of July 19, 1991, focused on the halibut fishery. Section 5.0 of that document was prepared by a social anthropologist and contained a detailed description of the social environment of the halibut fishery including present participation from coastal areas, historical fishing practices and dependence on the fishery by coastal communities, and details of native and subsistence fisheries. Specific demographic profiles of affected coastal communities are provided which address the relative economic importance of the halibut fishery to each community and the size,

composition, and stability of the resident work force relative to the fishery. The section concludes with an assessment that social and cultural benefits could be maximized under an IFQ program. Another one of the component analyses of the FEIS, dated March 27, 1992, also contains a section (3.0) devoted to assessment of potential coastal community impacts. This section describes the distribution of historical landings of halibut and sablefish relative to the distribution of harvesting privileges resulting from the IFQ program and the importance of these landings to each community relative to other species. This section also assesses the potential for QS to be transferred away from coastal communities. The assessment concludes that some net transfer of QS is likely to occur, but that overall, the IFQ program is expected to provide net benefits to rural coastal communities, Alaska, and the Nation (FEIS sec. 3.4). At the request of the Governor of Alaska, the Alaska Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission conducted an independent review of the IFQ program. That review concluded that fears of social disruption under the IFQ program are unfounded, and that rural coastal communities in Alaska are likely to realize benefits from the program. Additional social and economic analysis are not likely to substantially add to the understanding of the effects of this IFQ program on Alaska coastal communities. However, NOAA favors continued monitoring and analysis of the effects of the IFQ program during its implementation. Unanticipated injurious effects may be addressed by amending the IFQ program if necessary.

Comment 17: The IFQ program would give a disproportionate share of the resource to "non-Alaskan" fishermen precluding participation by the growing Alaska longline fleet. This will deny residents of Alaska communities the opportunity to fully diversify and develop their fisheries, creating financial hardship and adverse economic impacts.

Response: The IFQ program will distribute harvesting privileges among fishermen (vessel owners/lease holders) in proportion to their history of landings during the base period (1984–1990 for halibut and 1985–1990 for sablefish). In some areas, the amount of QS initially allocated to residents of Alaska will be larger than those to residents of other states, and in other areas the reverse will be true. Tables 1–4 in Appendix D to the FEIS dated September 15, 1992, quantitatively indicate the amounts of these proportions. For example, about 42 percent of the QS allocations for

sablefish in the Aleutian Islands subarea will go to residents of Alaska while 58 percent will go to residents of other states (Table 2). On the other hand, about 88 percent of the QS allocations for halibut in area 2C will go to Alaska residents, and only 12 percent will go to residents of other states (Table 1). This allocation reflects present participation in, and dependence on, the halibut and sablefish fisheries by species and area. Under this allocation scheme, residents from all states have an equal opportunity to diversify and develop their fisheries for halibut and sablefish.

Comment 18: The IFQ program could provide for more development of offshore processors which will reduce the raw fish tax revenues to Alaskan communities.

Response: Significant growth in offshore processing of halibut and sablefish is unlikely because catcher vessel QS cannot be transferred to freezer vessels. If any catcher vessel QS are used on a freezer vessel during a fishing trip, then all fish onboard during that trip must be unprocessed (§ 676.22(i)(3)). Conversely, Alaska raw fish tax revenue may increase under the IFQ program if the landed value of halibut and sablefish increases as expected.

Comment 19: Alaskan native people have not been able to fully develop their fisheries. Therefore, the Seldovia Village Tribe should be able to participate in the CDQ program. There is no reason for the CDQ program to be limited to western Alaska and prohibit natives along the central gulf coast from participating.

Response: The CDQ program is limited to western Alaska communities because the Council concluded that commercial marine fisheries could be developed in this area to the economic benefit of the participating communities and that commercial fisheries in these communities were undeveloped relative to other coastal communities in the State. A native organization in other parts of the State could acquire QS for use by its members. Catcher vessel QS used in this manner would have to be transferred to individuals. Current QS use limitations at § 676.22 (e) and (f), and the QS holder-on-board requirement at § 676.22 (c) and (i) would limit the manner in which QS held by native organizations is used. Nevertheless, the IFQ program could be used to facilitate development of Alaska native fisheries outside of the CDQ program.

Comment 20: The IFQ plan would deny the Huna Tlingit people of southeast Alaska the right to make a living by fishing as they have done for

IFQ program for the Pacific halibut fishery in and off of Alaska is consistent with the Halibut Act and other applicable laws.

An FEIS for the amendments was filed with the Environmental Protection Agency; a notice of its availability was published on December 11, 1992 (57 FR 58805). The FEIS includes a regulatory impact review cost-benefit analysis. A copy of the FEIS and cost-benefit analysis may be obtained from the Council (see ADDRESSES).

A regulatory flexibility analysis was prepared that describes the effects this rule will have on small entities. This analysis is contained in the FEIS. Based on this analysis, the Secretary concluded that this rule will have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. A summary of this determination is contained in the proposed rule (57 FR 57130, December 3, 1992).

This rule involves collection-of-information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980 (44 U.S.C. 3501, *et seq.*) that have been approved by OMB. The estimated response time for each collection-of-information required during the 2-year implementation period is expected to be 5.5 hours for the QS application, 4 hours to file an appeal on a QS application, and 2 hours for an IFQ crew member eligibility application.

The estimated response time for each collection of information during each year after the implementation period is 1 hour for notification of inheritance of QS, 2 hours for the application for transfer or lease of QS/IFQ, 2 hours for the corporate/partnership or other entity transfer application, 0.5 hours for the registered buyer application, 0.1 hour for the dockside sale receipt, 0.1 hour for prior notice of landing, 0.1 hour permission to land IFQs at any time other than 06:00–18:00, 0.1 hour for the vessel clearance application, 0.2 hour for the IFQ landing report, 0.1 hour for a transshipment notice, and 0.2 hour for the shipment or transfer report.

Additional costs to the public totaling \$150,000 for the implementation period and \$225,000 for each subsequent year are proposed for the IFQ program.

The estimated response time for each information requirement of the CDQ portion of the IFQ program will be approximately 160 hours per CDP, 40 hours for each annual report, 40 hours for each final report, and 10 hours for each amendment to a CDP.

These reporting burdens include the time for reviewing the instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing

the collection of information. Send comments regarding these burden estimates or any other aspect of the data requirements, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to NMFS, Fisheries Management Division, Alaska Region, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802, and to OMB, Paperwork Reduction Project (OMB control numbers 0648–0272 (IFQs for Pacific Halibut and Sablefish in the Alaska Fisheries) and 0648–0269 (Western Alaska CDQ Program)), Washington, DC 20503.

NMFS determined that this rule will be implemented in a manner that is consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the approved coastal management program of the State. This determination was submitted for review by the responsible State agencies under section 307 of the Coastal Zone Management Act. The State agencies agreed with this determination.

The final rule does not contain policies with federalism implications sufficient to warrant preparation of a federalism assessment under Executive Order 12812.

The Regional Director determined that fishing activities conducted under this rule will have no adverse impact on marine mammals.

The Regional Director has determined that fishing activities conducted under this final rule will not affect any endangered or threatened species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in any manner not already considered in the formal consultations conducted on the BSAI FMP and fishery (April 19, 1991), the 1992 BSAI TAC specifications (January 21, 1992), and Amendment 18 to the BSAI FMP (March 4, 1992) and the informal consultations conducted regarding the impacts of the 1993 BSAI TAC specifications on Steller sea lions (January 20, 1993) and the impacts of the 1993 BSAI and GOA groundfish fisheries on listed species of salmon (April 21, 1993) and listed species of seabirds (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, February 1, 1993; clarified February 12, 1993). Therefore, NMFS has determined that no further consultation, pursuant to section 7 of the ESA, is required for adoption of this final rule.

List of Subjects

50 CFR Part 204

Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

50 CFR Parts 672, 675, and 676

Fisheries, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

Dated: November 1, 1993.

Nancy Foster,

Deputy Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

For the reasons set out in the preamble, 50 CFR parts 204, 672, and 675 are amended and 50 CFR part 676 is added as follows:

PART 204—OMB CONTROL NUMBERS FOR NOAA INFORMATION COLLECTION REQUIREMENTS

1. The authority citation for part 204 continues to read as follows:

Authority: Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980, 44 U.S.C. 3501–3520 (1982).

2. In § 204.1(b), the table is amended by adding the following entries, in numerical order, to read as follows:

§ 204.1 OMB control numbers assigned pursuant to the Paperwork Reduction Act.

(b) . . .

50 CFR part or section where the information collection requirement is located	Current OMB control number (all numbers begin with 0648–)
676.13	–0272
676.14	–0272
676.17	–0272
676.20(d)	–0272
676.20(e)	–0272
676.21(f)	–0272
676.21(f)	–0272
676.24(d)	–0269
676.24(g)	–0269

PART 672—GROUND FISH OF THE GULF OF ALASKA

3. The authority citation for part 672 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

4. Section 672.3 is revised to read as follows:

§ 672.3 Relation to other laws.

(a) *Foreign fishing.* Regulations governing foreign fishing for groundfish in the Gulf of Alaska are set forth at 50 CFR 611.92. Regulations governing foreign fishing for groundfish in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands area are set forth at 50 CFR 611.93.

(b) *Halibut fishing.* Regulations governing the conservation and management of Pacific halibut are set forth at 50 CFR parts 301 and 676.

(c) *Domestic fishing for groundfish.* Regulations governing the conservation and management of groundfish in the

similar provisions of the Halibut Act are violated because the IFQ program is not reasonably calculated to promote conservation. As a biological conservation measure, quota share programs have proven ineffective and, in some cases, counterproductive. There will be increased pressure on managers to keep total catch limits high so that persons vested with harvesting rights will be able to pay off the debt of acquiring QS. Less efficient fishermen who retire from the halibut and sablefish fisheries will increase pressure on other fish stocks still under open access management. The potential biological harm from temporarily suspending halibut prohibited species catch (PSC) limits, under reporting, discards, and highgrading are not fully assessed and could negate any conservation benefits.

Response: The promotion of biological conservation under the IFQ program should be considered in comparison with biological conservation under current open access management. Under the current regime, fishermen are inspired to maximize their harvest of halibut or sablefish as fast as possible before fishery managers close the open fishing season. Large amounts of fish may be killed but not harvested in this race due to lost or excessive amounts of fishing gear that is set but not retrieved. More halibut and sablefish are wasted when they are caught incidental to the harvest of other species but must be discarded because the season for halibut and sablefish is closed. In addition, harvested halibut must occasionally be returned to the sea because they have been mishandled and are rejected by processors as inferior product. These sources of fishing mortality are often not quantified or counted toward the overall catch quota but may have a negative effect on stocks.

The IFQ program will significantly reduce these sources of fishing mortality because fishing will be conducted over a longer period with less waste. Fishermen will have no incentive to set more gear than they can retrieve, and fewer gear conflicts will result in less lost fishing gear. Halibut and sablefish caught incidental to the harvest of other species may be landed on unused IFQ. Discarded bycatch of IFQ species caught with fixed gear will be minimized because of the economic incentive to acquire IFQ at least sufficient to cover its retention and landing. Fishermen seeking the highest value for their product will take more time to properly clean and store fish on ice or process it immediately.

The potential for underreporting of IFQ harvests and highgrading are often

cited as biologically detrimental aspects of IFQ-style management programs. Underreporting and highgrading are discussed in detail in the FEIS at Appendix E (pp. 2-7). NOAA recognizes that underreporting will not be completely prevented, but a planned increased enforcement and monitoring effort coupled with severe penalties for gross underreporting is likely to minimize this potential source of biological damage to the stocks. Highgrading, the substitution of large high-valued fish for harvested small low-valued fish, is not expected to be a major threat because of increased enforcement and because a relatively small market price difference between small and large fish will reduce the profitability of highgrading and, therefore, the incentive to discard harvested fish. Generally, NOAA expects substantially less unreported fishing mortality under the IFQ program than under open access management.

Comment 29: The vast majority of technical comments and public opinions expressed to the Council were ignored by the Council. Something is wrong (with the IFQ program) when 75 to 85 percent of all responses are opposed to it. The IFQ program will not result in a better managed fishery and safer fishing conditions. It is advocated by a group of greedy individuals so that they can control a fishery that belongs to all the people. There have always been too many fishermen chasing too few fish. Sometimes this results in hurting the resource, but this is not the case with halibut which has been well managed.

Response: Over the 3 years that the Council had the IFQ program under consideration, it received thousands of oral and written comments that expressed support or opposition. The Secretary also received many pro and con comments on the IFQ issue before and during the Secretarial review period. The Council also received reports and advice from its industry advisory panel and scientific and statistical committee, and reviewed analyses and staff reports on the potential effects of the IFQ program as compared with the open access and other alternatives. After considering all of these comments, reports, recommendations, and analyses, the Council concluded that the IFQ program would result in better management of the fisheries and benefits to the Nation. The Secretary, after reviewing the record of comments, reports and analyses, agreed with the Council and approved the Council's IFQ recommendation.

Comment 30: Reducing the number of vessels in the fishery will not necessarily increase the length of fishing seasons since 20 percent of the vessels take 85 percent of the fish. If the bottom 80 percent of the fleet leaves the fishery there would be only a minimal increase in the length of openings.

Response: The IFQ program allows an IFQ permit holder to harvest halibut and sablefish at any time during the season prescribed at § 676.23. This is true regardless of the number of vessels in the fleet. No specific fleet size or reduction goal is established by the IFQ program. Instead, fishermen who have QS will harvest IFQ fish with fixed gear at various times of the year based on their assessment of the market for those species and other factors.

Comment 31: Four different sets of public comments (3 to the Council and 1 to the Governor of Alaska) indicate strong opposition to the IFQ plan from Alaskan residents and support from non-Alaska residents. Opposition comments from Alaskan addresses ranged between 59 percent and 98 percent of all comments received while supportive comments from non-Alaskan addresses ranged between 70 percent and 96 percent. This suggests that the plan discriminates between residents of different states in violation of national standard 4.

Response: These statistics do not indicate discrimination prohibited by national standard 4. State of residence is not a factor for the allocation of QS. Similarly situated residents of all states are treated equally under the IFQ program.

Comment 32: The proposed rule would exceed the permitting authority allowed by the Magnuson Act. The proposed rule provides for IFQ permits to be issued to persons, but the Magnuson Act allows permitting only of vessels or the operators of vessels. "Persons" are not vessels and they are not required to be operators of vessels.

Response: The Magnuson Act, at section 303(b)(10), provides authority to prescribe such other measures, requirements, or conditions and restrictions as are determined to be necessary and appropriate for the conservation and management of the fishery. NOAA has determined that IFQ permits may be issued to owners of vessels as opposed to operators of vessels.

Comment 33: The proposed rule would violate the U.S. Constitution at Article I, section 9, paragraph 6 because it would require vessels bound for another state to enter and clear at one of several ports in Alaska.

specific amounts of the sablefish CDQ reserve in the proposed and final harvest specifications published pursuant to § 675.20(a). These specifications for 1993 already have been published (57 FR 57718, December 7, 1992, and 58 FR 8703, February 17, 1993). Second, the halibut fishing periods prescribed at 50 CFR 301.7 are based on an open access management regime that is not relevant to a CDQ management regime. Changing these fishing periods for 1993 would require an extraordinary meeting of the IPHC and another Federal Register publication. Third, control of the halibut and sablefish CDQ programs would be exercised through the issuance of CDQ permits and CDQ cards (§ 676.24(j) (formerly § 676.25(j))). This control mechanism is designed to work with the IFQ permit and card system. NOAA has not yet fully developed either of these systems. Finally, the Council clearly intended that the CDQ program be implemented simultaneously with the IFQ program. Therefore, the CDQ program will be implemented concurrently with overall implementation of the IFQ program.

Comment 85: The proposed rule at § 676.24(b) (formerly § 676.25(b)) limits a sablefish CDQ allocation to any one applicant to a maximum of 12 percent of the total CDQ for all subareas. The Council's motion applied this restriction to any eligible community. It would be desirable to maintain the existing CDQ groupings that evolved under the pollock CDQ program first implemented in 1992. With no more than five or six CDQ group applications, the most that could be allocated under the proposed 12 percent limit would be 72 percent of the sablefish CDQ. The State recommends changing the rule to allow one applicant group to receive up to 33 percent of the total sablefish CDQ allocation, and that this provision be combined with the original Council proposal to limit any one community to no more than 12 percent of the total sablefish CDQ.

Response: After implementing the pollock CDQ program (57 FR 54938, November 23, 1992), NOAA agrees that limiting a CDQ allocation to any applicant to 33 percent of the total sablefish CDQ for all subareas would be more consistent with the pollock CDQ program (see § 675.27(c)(1)). However, it would be practically impossible to assure that no one community received more than 12 percent of the total sablefish CDQ when that community was grouped with other communities in receiving a CDQ allocation of up to 33 percent of the total. The approved FMP amendment text would limit any

western Alaska community to no more than 12 percent of the total sablefish CDQ. Under a literal interpretation of this text, it is conceivable that eight communities that may form a single group under the pollock CDQ program could receive virtually all of the sablefish CDQ. NOAA deviated slightly from this interpretation in the proposed rule by suggesting a 12-percent limit for any one applicant to simplify the accounting of sablefish landed against a CDQ allocation. For the reasons explained in the comment, this approach may not be ideal. Nevertheless, NOAA is not authorized to deviate substantially from the approved FMP amendment text. The Council could recommend another FMP amendment to the Secretary if this issue becomes a significant management problem in the future.

Comment 86: The proposed IFQ program will place increased demands on the State Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) for individual catch data and vessel ownership records. The CFEC's ability to respond to these requests has weakened in recent years due to budget reductions.

Response: NOAA intends to establish a unified database that includes all relevant catch and vessel ownership records on which the initial allocation of QS will be based. Cooperation with the CFEC and other state and Federal agencies will be necessary to establish this data set. After it is established, all queries should be directed to the IFQ program manager, Alaska Region, NMFS. Corroborating data from the State's fish ticket archives may be requested by fishermen. The State will be expected to respond to such requests as possible within its personnel and budget resources.

Comment 87: The State has a strong interest in collecting certain types of data on fish landings through its fish ticket system. These data are important for social and economic analyses. It is important that the IFQ program not interfere with the collection of these data. Further, monitoring the regional distribution of QS holdings is important because of concerns about social and economic impacts. The CFEC monitors permit transfers under the Alaska limited entry program because of these concerns and regularly reviews transfers to track changes in the residence status of permit holders. NMFS should monitor transfers of QS in similar ways.

Response: Implementation of the IFQ program should not interfere with the collection of fish ticket data by the State. NOAA is aware of the need to monitor the transfer of QS between rural and urban areas, and intends to develop

a QS transfer approval system that will provide useful data in response to social and economic impact concerns.

Comment 88: The major concern of the State is that the proposed IFQ program could lead to excessive consolidation of fishery access privileges and speculative investment in, and absentee-ownership of, QS by non-fishermen. These outcomes could cause substantial harm to Alaskan fishermen, shore-based processing industry, and coastal communities. For these reasons, the State considers the restrictions on transferability and use of QS to be essential to the success of the program.

Response: The limitations on QS use, QS and IFQ transfer, and the requirement for catcher vessel QS holders to be onboard during fishing operations are expressly intended to prevent the outcomes of concern to the State.

Comment 89: The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) appears to override the Council's intent to limit participants in the proposed halibut and sablefish IFQ program to U.S. citizens. Will Canadian or Mexican corporations be allowed to purchase halibut and sablefish QS under NAFTA? The Canadian IQ program allows foreign ownership of Canadian fishing rights because investment by Canadian corporations is not limited by a citizenship restriction. Will the United States reciprocate by relaxing the proposed citizenship requirements in the IFQ program?

Response: The U.S. citizenship requirements of the IFQ program will not be affected by NAFTA. The agreement includes an exception for the United States regarding fishing in U.S. waters.

Comment 90: The IFQ regulations should not discourage individuals from owning their vessels as solely-owned corporations for business reasons. As proposed, an individual who qualifies for an initial allocation of catcher vessel QS as an individual, but who later incorporates as a solely-owned corporation, would not be able to take advantage of the IFQ holder-on-board exception at § 676.22(i)(1) because the corporation now owns the vessel and not the individual. In addition, the same individual would not be able to transfer his QS to his solely-owned corporation because of the transfer restrictions at § 676.21. The rule should be modified to allow a solely-owned corporation to act as an individual for purposes of these sections.

Response: NOAA agrees that initial allocations of catcher vessel QS, as proposed, were too constraining and has

because it began work on amending the program before the program completed Secretarial review.

Response: The Council's objectives are clearly specified in the November 1989 analysis. In that document, and in subsequent documents (most recently at FEIS sec. 2.1), the Council identifies 10 conservation and management problems in the fixed gear fisheries for halibut and sablefish. NOAA expects any complex fishery management program to undergo periodic review and change as experience with the IFQ program suggests refinements. The fact that such refinements were not known at the beginning of the planning process does not indicate confusion regarding goals and objectives.

Comment 41: The Council failed to provide the public with an adequate and complete analysis of the benefits and costs of the IFQ program and of its potential social impacts. A social impact assessment would have demonstrated significant negative social impacts on Alaskan coastal communities from the IFQ program.

Response: The FEIS analyses prepared by the Council fully assess the potential benefits and costs of the IFQ program and its potential social impacts. A summary of the potential benefits and costs is in FEIS section 6.0, which estimates quantified annual benefits to be in the range of \$30.1 million to \$67.6 million. Quantified annual costs for administration are estimated to be about \$2.7 million. This results in a conservative benefit-cost ratio of about 10 to 1. Non-quantified benefits and costs also are discussed. NOAA finds that the analysis of benefits and costs in the FEIS is adequate. Significant negative social impacts on Alaskan coastal communities are doubtful (see responses to comments 5, 16, and 17).

Comment 42: The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA, is incorrect in his initial determination that the IFQ proposal is not a major rule under Executive Order 12291. The total estimated annual benefits (sic) are in excess of \$100 million, and a regulatory impact analysis should be prepared.

Response: Executive Order 12291 requires the preparation of a regulatory impact analysis for "major rules." Among the criteria for determining whether a rule is a "major rule" is its likelihood of resulting in an annual effect on the economy of \$100 million or more. An RIR was done as part of the FEIS and it is summarized in section 6.0 of the FEIS. The RIR concludes that the IFQ program would have an effect on costs, prices, competition, employment, investment, and productivity, but that it is anticipated that these effects

combined would not amount to \$100 million or more annually. The RIR estimates that quantifiable annual benefits would be in the range of \$30.1 million to \$67.6 million. Annual administrative and enforcement costs are estimated to be about \$2.7 million with an additional one-time implementation cost of about \$1.9 million. Therefore, NOAA determined that this is not a "major rule."

Comment 43: The public comment period should be extended to allow for adequate public review.

Response: As described in the preamble to the proposed rule, the Council has discussed limited entry options for various fisheries since the late 1970s and, for the sablefish fishery in particular, since 1985. Through April 1992, the issue of limited entry for the sablefish or halibut fisheries has been on the Council agenda for 27 meetings, and every meeting of 1988 through April 1992. All Council and committee meetings at which this subject was discussed were publicized, open to the public, and most provided opportunity for public comment. In addition, the Council chose to follow a full EIS-procedure under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for this issue, in part to enhance opportunity for public participation. This procedure provided for public scoping meetings and comment periods on several draft analyses and the FEIS. After receipt of the proposed IFQ program by the Secretary, a notice of availability was published on November 3, 1992 (57 FR 49676), and the proposed implementing rule was published on December 3, 1992 (57 FR 57130; corrected at 57 FR 61870, December 29, 1992). The comment period ended on January 11, 1993, which provided sufficient time for public review and comment. NOAA concludes that the opportunity for public review and participation in the IFQ decision-making process was adequate in light of extensive public discussion of this issue at Council meetings and compliance with requirements of the Magnuson Act and other applicable laws (see response to comment 27).

Comment 44: The proposed IFQ plan is not consistent with several sections of the Magnuson Act. Specifically, the plan violates several national standards (section 301), it does not include an adequate fishery impact statement in violation of section 303(a)(9), and it does not properly address the provisions of section 303(b)(6).

Response: Section 7.0 of the FEIS provides a summary of consistency with the Magnuson Act and other applicable laws. Consistency with each national

standard is addressed in this section and above in this rule. Magnuson Act section 303(b)(6) requirements are addressed in section 7.1.2 of the FEIS and above in this rule. The primary focus of the analysis in the FEIS is the potential effect of the IFQ program (and alternatives) on participants in the halibut and sablefish fisheries in compliance with the fishery impact statement requirement of the Magnuson Act at section 303(a)(9). Section 4.0 of the FEIS assesses the possible effects on non-IFQ fisheries, recreational fisheries, and fisheries in areas managed by adjacent Regional Councils. After reviewing these documents, NOAA determined that the IFQ program complies with the Magnuson Act and other applicable laws.

Comment 45: The proposed rule at § 676.16(h) (formerly § 676.16(g)) would prohibit the discard of Pacific cod and rockfish taken by vessels in the IFQ program. This requirement could cause a biological conservation problem because the bycatch allowances for rockfish are not high enough to prevent area quotas for some species of rockfish to be exceeded. The regulations should be changed to require the retention of only the natural or background bycatch of rockfish. Also, an overage provision for rockfish, similar to that for IFQ halibut, may be needed to avoid mandated waste.

Response: The prohibition on discarding Pacific cod or rockfish that are taken incidental to the harvest of IFQ halibut or sablefish applies only if Pacific cod or rockfish are not otherwise required to be discarded by other State and Federal regulations or inseason orders (see response to comment 78(a)).

Comment 46: The proposed rule at § 676.17(b) would establish a system that makes IFQ holders accountable for small overages of IFQ. It is not clear, however, who would be accountable for overages of leased IFQ. Would the holder of QS on which the IFQ is based be penalized or the person who leased the IFQ?

Response: The Regional Director would deduct an amount equal to the overage from IFQ allocated in the year following determination of the overage. This overage adjustment will apply to any person to whom the affected IFQ is allocated in the year the adjustment is made. For example, fisherman A transfers sablefish IFQ to fisherman B in 1995 through an approved lease of QS. Fisherman B lands sablefish that year that exceeds the leased amount by 3 percent. If this fact is determined by the Regional Director in 1996, then the IFQ allocated to fisherman A in 1997 will be reduced by 3 percent, assuming he

transferred his QS to another fisherman later the same year. The fisherman receiving such QS would not be allocated IFQ associated with the transferred QS until the following year. A decision to approve or disapprove a QS transfer in this case could not be based on the resulting amount of IFQ because the IFQ does not exist in the current year; it would not be realized by the QS holder until the year following approval of the QS transfer. In a different scenario, QS could be transferred by operation of law. Issuance of IFQ associated with that QS (if any) would not occur until the Regional Director approves the transfer for purposes of harvesting halibut or sablefish pursuant to § 676.21(e). This independent handling of QS and IFQ provides an effective means of implementing the QS ownership and holding limitations prescribed at § 676.22. Paragraph (c) of § 676.21 prevents QS from being used for fishing prior to the Regional Director's approval if the transfer occurs by operation of law, and has been rewritten to clarify this restriction in reference to paragraph (e) of this section. For administrative efficiency, all transferred QS will be controlled in the same manner (i.e., through the issuance of IFQ) because the only way for QS to be used to harvest halibut or sablefish is to have the associated IFQ (see response to comment 67).

Comment 75: An additional criterion for transfer approval should be added to § 676.21(e)(1) to prevent resale/buyback arrangements designed to circumvent anti-leasing provisions. The criterion would stipulate that the person applying to receive catcher vessel QS had not previously transferred QS to the same person applying to relinquish it.

Response: No change is made based on this comment. The suggested requirement would unnecessarily constrain the market for QS and add complexity that could slow transfer approval. The prevention of leasing can be accomplished more simply by careful monitoring of QS transfers over time. If additional information about QS transfers is needed to prevent leasing, it can be requested without changing the regulations under § 676.21(e)(1)(vii).

Comment 76: At § 676.24(j)(5) (formerly § 676.25(j)(5)), landings of CDQ halibut or sablefish should be made by a person with a valid CDQ card and only to a registered buyer.

Response: NOAA agrees and this paragraph (which was changed to § 676.24(j)(5); see change 16 above) is changed to clarify that CDQ halibut or sablefish must be landed by a person with a valid CDQ card and to a person

with a valid registered buyer permit. This change corrects an editorial oversight in the proposed rule. In addition, the same exceptions for dockside sales and outside landings as are provided at § 676.14(d) are provided for CDQ halibut or sablefish in § 676.24(j)(5).

Comment 77: The proposed regulations regarding sablefish would not apply in State waters. This should be made more explicit. In particular, they should state that sablefish fishing in Prince William Sound and waters of Southeast Alaska would be exempt from the Federal IFQ program and that the State is not relinquishing management authority over fisheries that may develop in other State waters. In addition, State regulations allow the retention of sablefish incidentally harvested by drift gillnet gear in Cook Inlet and other places. The proposed rules would require such sablefish to be treated as prohibited species. Although the incidental catch of sablefish while salmon fishing is not likely, existing State regulations allow for retention while the proposed rules would not. There are other potential inconsistencies relating to the possession of sablefish with an IFQ card in inside versus outside waters.

Response: NOAA agrees that regulations implementing the IFQ program with regard to sablefish do not apply in State internal waters and the adjacent territorial sea (State waters) to persons who do not have an IFQ permit described at § 676.13. However, the regulations in part 676 apply to all persons with current IFQ permits even when they operate within State waters. This clarification is made by revising the definitions of "IFQ sablefish" and "IFQ regulatory area" at § 676.11 and by adding text to §§ 676.12(c) and 676.13(a) relative to fishing within State waters. Drift gillnet gear is not included in the definition of "fixed gear" at § 676.11, so sablefish harvested in State waters by a person with this gear would not be subject to IFQ program rules regardless of whether that person held an IFQ permit.

Comment 78: Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) is concerned about how the proposed bycatch allowances and season structure will affect other fisheries managed by either ADF&G or NMFS. These concerns are as follows:

(a) Prohibiting the discard of Pacific cod or rockfish may preempt existing State regulations regarding harvest allowances for these species. It should be more clear that the bycatch, directed fishing allowances, or annual harvest

limits set by either ADF&G or NMFS cannot be exceeded.

(b) The sablefish bycatch allowance of 4 percent may have to be adjusted upward to prevent waste.

(c) The proposed sablefish season of March 1 through November 30 would not provide adequate protection for spawning sablefish stocks. Also, sablefish from internal waters could be still on the outside grounds early in the year. This suggests that early-year harvests could reduce later harvests of sablefish in State waters. ADF&G recommends a sablefish season of May 15 through November 30. This was the season for offshore sablefish prior to implementation of the Magnuson Act. It would avoid overlap with sablefish and halibut spawning periods, reduce the potential of double-harvesting sablefish populations from internal waters, and reduce the likely high bycatch of halibut during an early-season sablefish fishery.

(d) If establishing the halibut season on an annual basis is left to the IPHC, there is a potential for different seasons for both species. This seems contrary to the intent of minimizing bycatch problems.

Response: (a) NOAA agrees that retention of Pacific cod or rockfish while fishing in State waters should not be required in contravention of State regulations. Section 676.16 is changed to expand the exceptions to the prohibition on discarding fish to include State requirements in redesignated paragraphs (h) and (i). Paragraph (h) prohibits the discard of Pacific cod or rockfish taken incidental to the harvest of IFQ fish to prevent wasting these species. Paragraph (i) prohibits the discard of halibut or sablefish caught with fixed gear from any catcher vessel when any IFQ card holder onboard has unused IFQ for these species in the area and vessel category in which the catcher vessel is operating. Both of these paragraphs provide exceptions to these discard rules in the event that other Federal regulations require discarding of these species for biological conservation purposes.

(b) Directed fishing standards for sablefish caught with fixed gear are specified at §§ 672.20(g)(4) and 675.20(h)(4). When directed fishing is prohibited, amounts of sablefish on a vessel in excess of prescribed amounts would constitute a violation of the prohibition. This management tool is commonly used in-season to close an open access fishery when the TAC for sablefish is nearly exhausted. Under the IFQ program, however, the directed fishing season for sablefish would remain open during the dates prescribed

that QS stay in the hands of active fishermen. Temporary exceptions to this rule for extreme personal injury should be stringent to prevent QS holders using this provision to get around the leasing prohibition.

Response: Emergency waiver of requirements for an individual IFQ card holder to be onboard during fishing operations and sign the IFQ landing report is provided at § 676.22(d). These requirements may be waived only for the IFQ halibut and IFQ sablefish retained on the fishing trip during which an extreme personal emergency occurred that prevented the IFQ card holder from complying with § 676.22(c). Use of IFQ held by an injured or deceased IFQ permit/card holder on subsequent fishing trips would require transfer approval as prescribed at § 676.21(e).

Comment 54: What happens to a person's QS when they die? Can it be leased while their estate is being resolved or temporarily used by an heir? At what age may a person take on the responsibility of owning QS?

Response: When a QS holder dies, that person's QS would be transferred by the laws of succession. Notification of such transfers by operation of law would have to be sent to the Regional Director as prescribed at § 676.21. After determining that a person is the lawful holder of QS received by operation of law, that person may subsequently seek approval to use, lease, sell, or otherwise transfer QS within the limitations of the regulations. There is no provision for temporarily using QS before use, lease, or other subsequent transfer of the QS that was transferred by operation of law has been formally approved by the Regional Director. No age criteria are prescribed for receiving or using QS. Anyone capable of satisfying the QS-holder-on-board requirements for catcher vessel QS at § 676.22 (c) and (i) could use such QS.

Comment 55: The cost of the CDQ program to QS holders would be substantial because they would receive less QS than they otherwise would without the CDQ program. Any additional costs incurred to implement and administer the CDQ program should be borne only by the CDQ recipients.

Response: The Magnuson Act does not authorize charging CDQ program implementation costs to CDQ recipients.

Comment 56: The wording at § 676.20(a)(1)(iii) is vague regarding evidence of a verbal vessel lease which is common practice in the catcher vessel fleet. One recommended form of documenting such vessel leases is to determine who paid the crew members and, therefore, was responsible for

issuing them their Federal income tax form 1099.

Response: NOAA agrees that language in the proposed paragraph regarding Federal income tax documents is vague, but limiting acceptable documentation to a specific tax form, such as Form 1099, does not improve the paragraph. Therefore, Federal income tax documents are deleted from § 676.20(a)(1)(iii) as acceptable evidence of a vessel lease, for purposes of initial allocation to vessel lease holders. This language was included in the proposed rule in response to fishing industry concerns about documenting the existence of a vessel lease. Some fishermen argued that vessel lease holders would be responsible for mailing IRS Form 1099 to the crew and that this would demonstrate the fact that persons issuing such forms were lease holders. This is a vague standard because persons hired by a vessel owner may submit this form to the IRS on behalf of the vessel owner. The final rule deletes this evidence of a vessel lease. The option of an after-the-fact statement from the vessel owner and lease holder attesting to the existence of a lease remains for persons who did not have a written vessel lease agreement. Agreement should be reached between former vessel owners and lease holders to draft and sign such statements when there was no previous written lease.

Comment 57: The definition of "freezer vessel" should be based on the performance of a vessel during any fishing trip. This would allow freezer vessels to use catcher vessel QS for sablefish when they are not operating as freezer vessels.

Response: In § 676.11, "freezer vessel" is defined as any vessel that is used to process some or all of its catch during any fishing trip. Fishing "trip" also is defined in § 676.11. Hence, operating as a freezer vessel depends on how the vessel handles its catch during a fishing trip. Note, however, that a freezer vessel that operates as a catcher vessel during a trip for purposes of using sablefish catcher vessel QS, is still a "processor vessel" under §§ 672.2 and 675.2 because this definition depends on the capability of a vessel to process groundfish regardless of whether it actually processes fish on any fishing trip (see also change 2 under "Changes from the Proposed Rule in the Final Rule" above).

Comment 58: The Council did not intend to allow catcher vessel IFQ for halibut to be used on freezer vessels. The provision at § 676.22(i)(3) to allow catcher vessel IFQ to be used on freezer vessels was intended to apply only to sablefish. A new prohibition should be

added at § 676.16 to say it is unlawful to use halibut catcher vessel shares on a vessel which has, or will, during the current year of participation, operate as a freezer vessel.

Response: NOAA agrees that the IFQ motion approved by the Council specifically states that sablefish catcher vessel QS may be used on a freezer vessel providing no frozen product of any other species is onboard at the same time. The regulation at § 676.22(i)(3) more broadly allows for halibut catcher vessel QS to be used on a freezer vessel in the same manner. This allows for a bycatch of halibut on such vessels to be retained and landed in compliance with the requirement to land all fish unprocessed. The broader application of this regulation could reduce discard waste of halibut. This interpretation of the Council's motion does not require vessels operating as freezer vessels to land halibut if they have catcher vessel halibut IFQ onboard. NOAA understands that the Council did not want to require vessels operating as freezer vessels to have IFQ for all of their halibut bycatch because this would create an economic incentive for freezer vessel owners to acquire catcher vessel QS. This is why the discard prohibition at § 676.16(l) is specific to catcher vessels. Finally, another part of the Council's motion states that "fish" harvested with catcher vessel QS may not be frozen onboard the vessel using those QS. The non-specific "fish" in this case indicated to NOAA that a broader interpretation of the provision to use catcher vessel IFQ on freezer vessels operating as catcher vessels would be consistent with Council intent while allowing for less discard waste of halibut.

Comment 59: Exactly what is "QS?" The preamble to the proposed rule suggests that QS is related to a person's catch history expressed in pounds, but the regulatory text implies that QS is a percentage.

Response: In § 676.11, "QS" is defined as a permit, the face amount of which is used as a basis for the annual calculation of a person's IFQ. This is a change from the definition of QS in the proposed rule that stated it was an amount of sablefish or halibut. This change is made because the proposed rule incorrectly implies that QS is expressed in volumetric terms. However, the units of a QS permit are simply "QS." A QS is converted into pounds of IFQ in the annual IFQ calculation. A QS is based on qualifying poundage of halibut or sablefish plus or minus any transferred amounts. Qualifying poundage is calculated for each qualified person who harvested

the release of catch and landings data recorded on state fish tickets. For example, the confidentiality of data recorded on State of Alaska fish tickets must be maintained pursuant to Alaska Statutes 16.05.815. The State's Department of Law has concluded that these data may not be released to a vessel owner or lease holder unless (a) the vessel owner or lease holder recorded the landing on a State fish ticket, or (b) the vessel owner or lease holder obtains a waiver of confidentiality from the individual who recorded the landings on the fish ticket.

Due to the various confidentiality protection afforded by state and Federal law, it is possible that a QS applicant will be eligible for an initial allocation of QS based on legal landings recorded or submitted to NMFS or to a state agency by a person other than the applicant. Under such circumstances, confidentiality laws will prevent NMFS from crediting those landings data to the QS applicant without a written confidentiality waiver signed by the submitter.

Comment 64: The proposed rule preamble and regulatory text at § 676.20(d)(2) indicate that initial allocations of QS will be based on uncontested catch and vessel ownership or lease data. It is possible that the ultimate resolution of contested data could affect the vessel category assignment of the original uncontested data. How would this be resolved?

Response: Each allocation of QS will be assigned to a vessel category as prescribed at § 676.20(c). The potential of a person receiving an initial allocation of QS in more than one vessel category is addressed in that paragraph. This regulation makes no provision for changing the vessel category assignment of QS after it has been issued because such an event was not contemplated by the Council in its motion. Unique vessel category assignment problems will be considered on a case-by-case basis and assignments may be appealed.

Comment 65: The IFQ program approved by the Council contained a provision for overages but none for underages. Adding a harvest underage (§ 676.17(b)) to the following year's IFQ was discussed by the Council and rejected due to biological concerns.

Response: NOAA agrees that large amounts of underages in any year could provide for a total IFQ harvest in excess of the fixed gear TAC. At the extreme, NOAA would have to limit the reallocation of underages if overfishing were threatened. Therefore, §§ 676.17(b) and 676.20(f)(1) are changed to delete authority to reallocate unharvested amounts of IFQ less than 5 percent of

the amount specified under the IFQ permit. As originally proposed, amounts of IFQ less than 5 percent of the amount specified under the IFQ permit could be reallocated to the following year. This was intended to complement the reverse provision of subtracting up to 5 percent of an IFQ overage from the allocation in a succeeding year and to reduce overages. Adding large amounts of unharvested IFQ to a succeeding year's total IFQ allocated could result in a more serious biological problem than subtracting overharvested IFQ. Unharvested amounts of IFQ in any year or area will be foregone in subsequent years or other areas.

Comment 66: The proposed rule would not allow a QS owner to sell all QS in any year in which it was leased.

Response: No part of any QS can be transferred at once to different persons. A QS transfer would not be approved if the person transferring it did not currently hold it. Leased QS is held by the lease holder, not the original QS holder, until the lease expires. However, a transfer of QS to one person could be made effective immediately after the expiration of a lease to a different person.

Comment 67: The Council intended the ownership caps to apply to QS and IFQs, but the proposed rule would allow a person to acquire QS up to the ownership limit regardless of the amount of IFQ it represents. The Council understood that ownership of QS up to the 1 percent limit (for sablefish) could result in more than 1 percent of the IFQ for an area in subsequent years. This could result from variance in the QS pool or the area TAC or both. The excess IFQ in such cases should be usable providing that the QS and IFQ limits were not exceeded in the year they were acquired. However, excess IFQ should not be issued if the QS on which it is based is acquired through inheritance or court order.

Response: The rule differs from the language of the Council's motion with respect to personal limits on QS or IFQ. This difference was explained in the preamble to the proposed rule (under "Limits on QS Use" at 57 FR 57137). Briefly, it is neither expedient nor practical for the Secretary to impose a limit on the amount of QS that a person "owns" or "holds" as contemplated by the Council. This is because some transfers will occur by operation of law that are not approved by the Regional Director. However, the Regional Director will control the "use" of QS to harvest IFQ fish through the issuance of an IFQ permit. Therefore, the rule indirectly implements the Council's limits on "owning" QS by imposing a limit on

"using" QS. In practice, the QS use limitations prescribed at § 676.22 (e) and (f) are governed by the amount of approved QS relative to the QS pool for an area or combined areas. To this extent NOAA notes that proposed § 676.22(e) incorrectly specifies the sablefish QS use limit as 1 percent of the combined sablefish TAC for the GOA and BSAI areas. The limit should be 1 percent of the combined total sablefish QS for the GOA and BSAI areas to be consistent with the Council's motion and amendment text, with the use limit for the area east of 140° west longitude, and the halibut QS use limits. This mistake in the proposed rule is corrected by adding text in the first sentence of § 676.20(f) limiting the assignment of IFQ to the QS use limitations specified at § 676.22 (e) and (f). This change clarifies that the QS use limitations will be governed by the issuance of IFQ on approved amounts of QS that are within those limitations unless excess amounts were received by the QS holder in the initial allocation.

Approved amounts of QS will be issued all of the IFQ due from that QS up to the prescribed limits. The only exception is that an initial allocation of QS that exceeds a use limit will be issued additional IFQ based on that part of the initially allocated QS that is over the limit. Changes in the QS pool may affect QS use, but changes in the TAC will not. For example, sablefish QS (not initially allocated) at the 1 percent limit one year could be fully used by having an IFQ permit issued based on the full amount of QS. If the QS pool is decreased in the following year, then the sablefish QS, unchanged from the previous year, will exceed the 1 percent limit. An IFQ permit would be issued on 1 percent of the QS, and the excess QS over 1 percent would not be "funded" with IFQ that year. Changes in the QS pool from year to year, however, are likely to be less pronounced than changes in the TAC. Sablefish QS holdings at or near the use limits may result in sablefish IFQ that is more or less than 1 percent of the TAC (or of the total IFQ) in any given year. Hence, if a QS holding within use limits yields an IFQ that is excess to 1 percent of the TAC, that IFQ would still be available to harvest by the holder of the QS on which the IFQ is based. However, IFQ would not be issued for transferred QS that has not been approved by the Regional Director or QS in excess of the use limitations (unless received in the initial allocation).

Comment 68: An exception to the requirement for catcher vessel QS holders to be onboard the vessel during fishing operations is provided at